



Atmosphere and Aesthetics

A Plural Perspective

Edited by
Tonino Griffero · Marco Tedeschini

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Tonino Griffero and Marco Tedeschini

Although the title of this volume includes the term “Aesthetics”, its chapters are not mainly devoted to the question of art. The reader should not be surprised nor suspect an error due to “clumsy” editors. Nowadays, aesthetics is no longer only a theory of art, it but has recovered its original vocation: to be a general theory of perception (from Baumgarten’s baptism in 1750) conceived of as an ordinary experience of pre-logical character. Indeed, even the most art-oriented aesthetics deals with art as an immersive object of our sensorial and felt-bodily perception. In this broader context, our purpose is to show whether atmospheres could take the prominent and paradigmatic position previously held by art in order to make sense of such pre-logical experience of the world.

In the last twenty years, the ordinary concept of “atmosphere” has been more and more subsumed by human and social sciences, thereby becoming a technical notion. This book has been conceived and compiled to give an account of this increasing popularity, which comes with a general reassessment of affective life as a proper tool to understand the human being. In many fields of the humanities affectivity is now considered crucial, and

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the concept of atmosphere has been adopted exactly because of its peculiar understanding of this side of our lives. In this sense, one may speak of an “atmospheric turn”. With this book we aim at providing the first wide-ranging state-of-the-art knowledge on this phenomenon in English.

Speaking of “atmosphere” does not simply mean focusing on human emotions. Indeed, “atmosphere” also implies a certain affective quality of (lived and non-geometrical) space. Put in general terms, an atmosphere is an emotional space that involves one’s body conceived of more as felt (*Leib*) than as physical (*Körper*): accordingly, the body that plays a key role in an atmospheric approach is not the body that we see in the mirror but the one we feel, and whose atmospheric resonances we can describe only from our first-person perspectives. The idea of atmosphere can undergo different degrees of radicality: it may imply a full independence of the emotional space from the subjective life (as suggested by Hermann Schmitz, see Chap. 3), or some dependence on the personal subject (as posited, e.g., by Gianni Francesetti, see Chap. 13). Whatever the case, the conceptual framework presupposed by the concept of “atmosphere” suggests that our affective life goes beyond the interior and subjective one. This approach proposes a solution to understand why our emotions and feelings can be (at least) intersubjectively shared.

Every chapter of our book addresses these questions from the peculiar standpoint of a specific discipline: from architecture to literature and music, from law to sociology, from pedagogy to philosophy and psychology. Of course, we were not able to gather scholars from all the disciplines in which the topic of atmospheres has been dealt with. For instance, we have collected contributions neither from anthropology nor from design, or economics, or the theories of organizations and management. This is not only due to the fact that not all invited scholars could take part in this project, but also, and mostly, due to the fact that our choice was to edit a book on “atmosphere” but also, as stated previously, a book on “aesthetics”.

We divided the book into four parts. The first one, “Atmospheric Turn?”, deals with the theoretical framework behind the concept of “atmosphere”. Tonino Griffero, in his essay “Is There Such a Thing as an ‘Atmospheric Turn?’”, asks whether the theme of atmosphere is only a short-term cultural trend, or whether it hides something deeper concerning our lives as human beings. Griffero notices that the humanities use the notion of atmosphere as a heuristic device to empirically research affects whenever it is necessary to pay attention to the vague and qualitative “something-

more” that one experiences. He then traces a history of the emergence of the concept of “atmosphere”. Lastly, he sums up his personal “atmosphero-logical” perspective on the topic.

Hermann Schmitz’s “Atmospheric Spaces” offers a short history of the concept of space, from which he derives a differentiation of spaces. He claims that it is necessary to consider the felt body as the object that lives “in” and “through” the spaces. The felt body is something that a human being can feel as belonging to them in the region of their body without resorting to the five senses. Furthermore, the chapter shows that human beings as felt bodies have developed techniques to design spaces according to their emotional and atmospheric needs. In this sense, habitation is the culture of emotions—which are atmospheres with a tendency to fully expand within the space of felt presence—in enclosed spaces.

Jürgen Hasse’s *Atmospheres and Moods* compares “mood” and “atmosphere”. He claims that these forms of emotional state are closely related. While basic moods are rooted in a personal situation, atmospheres often affect the individual from spatial and social environments. However, it is too easy to understand moods as feelings coming from the inside and atmospheres as feelings that affect us from the outside. Both have internal and external references and in both circumstances a person is confronted with their own (temporary and long-lasting) emotional states. The threshold from which an atmosphere becomes a mood corresponds to the power of a feeling that generates subjective involvement. This is what constitutes the difference between the two: there are distinct forms of subjective “being-with”, one with emotional distance and one without.

Finally, Lorenzo Marinucci’s *Japanese Atmospheres* aims at introducing three fundamental atmospheric notions deployed by Japanese culture, observing them both in their original context and through a neophenomenological lens. The three concepts are that of *kū* “sky”, *fū* “wind”, and *ki* “air” and “breath”. These apparently simple terms, however, show an impressive complexity and a wide array of meanings (which, after all, are highly coherent). Despite the risk of exoticizing non-European sources as “totally other”, this essay clarifies the potential of a cross-cultural phenomenology of atmospheres, also presenting the work of modern Japanese philosophers that have already retraced the heritage of these concepts in a philosophical perspective.

The second part of the book, *Senses and Spaces*, collects chapters concerning the manifold and multi-layered experience of space. Pallasmaa’s chapter on *The Atmospheric Sense* provides a historical, ecological, and evo-

lutionary perspective on the meaning of atmospheric experience. Atmosphere and mood are a central concern in various art forms, including painting, literature, theatre, cinema, and music. Our capacity for spatial, situational, and atmospheric imagination when reading a fine literary work is quite astonishing. Western culture has emphasized the separate functions of the five Aristotelian senses, but our most important sensory experience is the interaction of the senses, which creates the experience of “the flesh of the world”, to use Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion. We grasp entities before details, singularities before their components, multi-sensory syntheses before individual sensory features, and emotive existential meanings before intellectual understanding. Besides, precision needs to be suppressed for the purpose of grasping large entities.

David Seamon’s “Atmosphere, Place, and Phenomenology” focuses on a phenomenology of atmosphere as related to places. By “atmosphere”, the author refers to a diffuse ineffability that regularly attaches itself to particular things, situations, spaces, and environments. By “place”, he refers to any environmental locus gathering experiences, actions, events, and meanings both spatially and temporally. Seamon assumes that place and the experience of a place are an integral part of human life. In considering the lived relationship between atmosphere and place, he draws on three works by British-African novelist Doris Lessing, who in her writings regularly offers lucid accounts of place atmospheres in London, the city she emigrated to from Southern Rhodesia shortly after World War II.

Michael Hauskeller and Tim Rice examine the importance of atmosphere in understanding our experiences of zoos. Their chapter, *Jungly Feeling*, focuses in particular on the role played by sound in the production of atmospheres in the zoo context. Zoos often work hard to generate atmospheres which are appropriate to their purpose as sites for entertainment, education, and conservation, and the encouragement of environmentally responsible behaviour. Drawing on first-hand experiences of zoo visits, the chapter considers some of the different types of atmosphere created by zoos. The authors argue that zoos are atmospherically heterogeneous and complex, and face continual challenges as they try to design and maintain atmospheres in line with institutional aims and visitors’ expectations.

Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos’s chapter, *Atmospheric Aestheses*, deals with the affective value of law. Traditionally, the most easily recognizable forms of law (state law, private law, corporations law, etc.) have always been associated with an economic value, which, albeit with some unease, lies next to both the functional value of the law, as the order

provider in society, and its more idealized value as provider of justice. Law's commodity value, however, is increasingly superseded by its affective value, namely, law's ability to stage itself and communicate to the world that it and nothing else *is* the law. It has to stage itself in a consumer-oriented way, to market itself in a socially engaging way, and to package itself in a media-appetizing way.

Finally, Jean-Paul Thibaud's "The Lesser Existence of Ambiance" identifies "atmosphere" and "ambiance" and defines the mode of being of the latter. Ambiance is rooted in a fragile, spectral, and precarious mode of existence: this being the case, it exerts impregnating powers. Thibaud explores three complementary perspectives. First, ambiance can be seen as an in-between that phenomenalizes the world and makes any situation perceptible. Second, ambiance can be understood as an attunement that highlights our ability to be affected by our surroundings and affect them in turn. Third, ambiance can be conceived as a background that helps us understand how it infuses our various ways of being together. Finally, Thibaud's detailed description leads him to identify five key features for the ambiance's powers of impregnation.

The third part of the book, *Subjects and Communities*, shows atmospheric scenarios within both the subjective and the social life. In its first chapter, "Atmospheres and Memory", Steffen Kluck examines the atmospheric qualities of memory and remembrance. He inquires what kind of atmospheres are involved with states of remembrance. Empirically, the main focus of the examination is Marcel Proust's detailed description of remembrance. Overall, memory is recognized as accessible through a phenomenological analysis. The terms of new phenomenology are able to show what happens within the context of memory processes. Finally, it is also shown that atmospheres play a role both as content and as trait of these processes.

In the following chapter, *Atmospheres of Learning, Atmospheric Competence*, Barbara Wolf applies the paradigm of atmosphere and its framework to the educational situations, which are still mainly based on curricula, methods, and principles of teaching. The chapter hypothesizes that the individual way of interaction between pedagogue and child is at least as important as the above-mentioned aspects. The concept of "atmospheres" in this context demonstrates in what subtle ways children's socialization is influenced and how to use this knowledge for a positive impact. The notion illuminates elementary processes of learning not just as a cognitive function but as a guided experience in the concrete learning situation.

Gianni Francesetti's "Psychopathology, Atmospheres and Clinical Transformations" argues for a conception of psychopathology that goes beyond a symptomatic and individualistic understanding of human suffering. Starting from a critique of the dominant paradigm in clinical psychotherapy and psychiatry today, Francesetti attempts to describe how the concept of "atmosphere" can help open up a different understanding of psychopathology, diagnosis, and clinical practice. It is a paradigm shift that can lead psychopathologists onto a new epistemological ground, one that posits the relationship before the related, where subjects and the world emerge incessantly from an undifferentiated ground in which they are not yet defined.

"The Lightness of Atmospheric Communities", by Mikkel Bille, is the last chapter of this part. Bille focuses on what the atmospheric aspects of places do, in particular on how they shape a sense of community. With an ethnographic focus on everyday practices of domestic lighting in Denmark, and the atmospheres called *hygge*, Bille claims that atmospheres are not only individually experienced, but also entangled in everyday practices and cultural norms of sensing and appreciating atmospheres that connect people, places, and things in atmospheric communities. It is thereby argued that atmospheres may connect different scales of experiences from the individual to the collective, from neighbourhood to a national identity.

The fourth and last part of the book, *Aesthetics and Art Theory*, aims at displaying the difference and, nonetheless, the convergence between the two areas. In his "Smell and Atmosphere", Gernot Böhme briefly retraces the origin of the term "atmosphere" in meteorological terminology and observes that since Goethe's Age it has been metaphorically used in all European languages. This metaphorical usage expresses the idea of a tuned space, that is, a space endowed with a mood. By examining the tight connections between atmospheres and smell, this chapter aims to show that smells are crucial factors in the generation of atmospheres. The lack of distance within the experience of smelling can lead to totally getting lost in it, so that the atmosphere of smelling may become one's entire world. Thus, such an experience can be, in a sense, profanely mystical, and the simple sense of smell can coincide with a moment of pure joy.

The relationship between the human being and their environment is also investigated in Marco Tedeschini's chapter, *Atmosphere and Taste*. Here he addresses the topic of atmosphere by wondering whether this concept is compatible with that of taste. After comparing the two origi-

nal theories of atmosphere, Tedeschini argues for their need for a concept of “taste”. Finally, he discusses the first systematic though non-philosophical usage of the concept of “atmosphere”, strictly related to that of “taste”, in order to show the relevance of the latter for understanding the relationship between individual and environment.

Tadashi Ogawa devotes a chapter, *Atmosphere and Renga*, to an atmospheric interpretation of this traditional form of Japanese poetry. Analysing *Renga* has relevant cultural implications. It shows that poetry is not only centred on the “singing” subject, but it is also a collective way of creating poetry in the same place. The attunement among the people gathered to create the poem engenders the collective atmosphere within which they are immersed and is further evidence of the common root between philosophy and poetry—that is, an interest in the world and human beings.

The penultimate chapter, Friedlind Riedel’s *The Atmosphere of Tones*, is an enquiry into the use of the term “atmosphere” in Germanophone music scholarship between 1840 and 1930. She claims that the semantic scope of the term can only be understood by taking into account the full panoply of conceptual source domains. Surveying a large body of writings on music, she argues that, by using the term “atmosphere”, music scholars have sought to bring the timbral, sonorous, and voluminous dimensions of music into focus, and have ascribed it to particular tonal structures and styles such as impressionism. The author defines atmosphere as a holistically embedding and penetrating feeling, suggesting to understand it as a “mereological” being.

The final chapter is devoted to *Architecture as a Musical Atmosphere*. According to Alberto Pérez-Gómez, recent architectural theory has increasingly identified the importance of atmosphere as a primary aesthetic concept in architecture. This essay aims at properly understanding the importance of musical analogies in architectural theories throughout Western history. There is no *aporia* in the understanding of architectural musical atmospheres as both emotional and intelligible, structured and ephemeral; they are in fact perfectly open to an architecture demanding both fixity and tectonic coherence, in dialogue with a topographic situation and a programmatic deployment, one that should at best offer psychosomatic attunement for a wholesome life.

PART I

Atmospheric Turn?



Is There Such a Thing as an “Atmospheric Turn”? Instead of an Introduction

Tonino Griffèro

1 IN THE MOOD FOR ATMOSPHERES

Atmospheres have only recently started to be in great demand both within and outside of the academic discourse. Is it only a cultural trend, a cash cow or small talk that is only convincing for a short time and for unknown reasons, or does it hide something deeper? Before answering this question, usually swept under the rug by the most influential literature, one ought to show the extent of such dissemination. Here, I won't be able to give a comprehensive account of the countless and increasing applications of the notion¹ in all the humanities interested in understanding how to produce (or awaken, at least) atmospheres. I will therefore simply offer a first insight into them (although any overview on the topic will probably soon become outdated).

¹The term comes from the Greek (ἀτμός=vapour and σφαῖρα=sphere). In meteorology, it denotes the gaseous envelope surrounding our planet and only in the eighteenth century it began to metaphorically indicate “the conditions under which real or imaginary life might flourish” (Gandy 2017, 355).

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Leaving aside, for the moment, the philosophical contributions to the topic,² one ought to mention here some humanistic fields that are not necessarily directly linked to the German philosophy of atmosphere: first of all, architecture³ and urban studies,⁴ which aim at clarifying and “measuring” (in a sense to be specified)⁵ how cities, buildings, streets, traffic and so on pathically modulate the felt-bodily (*leiblich*) space of perceivers through sensory (not always conscious) experiences and therefore affectively influence how well or bad people live. Cities and buildings are considered as inviting characters and tacit “gestures”,⁶ as atmospheric affordances one could experience in situ, for example, through a “parcours commenté”⁷ based on observing, accompanying, reminding and discussing the different *ambiances* experienced. Others see the specificity of an atmospheric architectural perception in a (usually) underestimated “peripheral unfocused vision”,⁸ also using first-person lifeworldly micrologies able to account for a deep qualitative experience of (and attachment to) a certain place,⁹ like, just to give three examples, sailor graveyards, marketplaces and sports stadiums.¹⁰ In general, it appears that a good architecture fundamentally should offer a possibility of attunement, that

² After Schmitz and Böhme (cf. *infra* §4), the main philosophers who have dealt with atmospheres include Hauskeller (1995, 2002), Hasse (2005), Griffero and Somaini (2006), Landweer (2007), Griffero (2010, 2013, 2016a, 2019b), Graupner et al. (2010), Blum (2010), Goetz and Graupner (2007, 2012), Debus and Posner (2007), Andermann and Eberlein (2011), Rauh (2012, 2018b), Rappe (2012), Heibach (2012), Tedeschini (2014), Diaconu and Copoeru (2014), Bulka (2015), Brünner (2015), Griffero and Moretti (2018).

³ See at least Wigley (1998), Zumthor (2006), Böhme (2006, 2017b), Kamphuis and Onna (2007), Bressani and Sprecher (2019) and, *contra*, Leatherbarrow (2016).

⁴ See Amphoux et al. (2005), Augoyard (1979; 2005), Thibaud and Siret (2012), Thibaud (2015), Rémy and Tixier (2016), Kazig et al. (2017), La Calvé and Gaudin (2018).

⁵ At least since Milgram (1974).

⁶ Cf. Meisenheimer (2006), Hahn (2012), Jäkel (2013), Blok and Farias (2016).

⁷ See especially Thibaud (2001, 2015).

⁸ Pallasmaa (2005, 2014), thus implicitly referring to environmental-psychological concepts such as “peripheral information” (Ittelson 1973) and “ambient vision” (Schönhammer 2018, 149).

⁹ Cf. Anderson (2009, 2014), Michels (2015), Seamon (2013, 2017, 2018) and, above all, Hasse (2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017).

¹⁰ Cf. Hasse (2016, 2018), Uhrich (2008). For a more detailed survey on sport as paradigmatic atmospherised socialisation through coaches and sportsmen, see Meyer and Wedelstaedt (2018).

is, a space of appearance consonant with people’s actions and habits (Pérez-Gómez 2016),¹¹ tacitly improving them.

Turning now to the arts, the atmospheric approach seems especially useful for contemporary art, which compensates for the increasing fictionalisation-virtualisation of the world, increasingly inviting the spectator to a pathic-immersive experience of its works (which at times can even be touched, tapped, scratched on the surface, etc.). It is often suggested that through art one apprehends what an everyday atmospheric experience is like in a privileged and intensified way. It is not clear, yet, when art itself is atmospheric in a more precise way: when does it arouse a “responsive” and not primarily semantic experience based on the subject/object indistinction? When does it express a specific qualitative appearance through peculiar themes and modalities?¹² When is it so self-referential to induce people to ask how it shows something rather than what it is? Or when (according to “institutional theory”) does it depend on the whole institutional, and in this narrow sense atmospheric, “world of art”, for example, on a critic’s legitimation or on a museum as ontological transformers of everyday objects? The list goes on.¹³

But it is theatre, at least since Chekhov’s reflections (1953) about the atmospheric link between stage and audience, that has long been the readiest and most multimodal model for an aesthetics of atmosphere.¹⁴ Photography, in turn, seems to be atmospheric especially when its performative rhetoric builds on a transpictorial and multisensorial conception of images (Becker 2010). Something similar applies to lyrics,¹⁵ film and media,¹⁶ in short, to all the fields discussing if and when artistic atmospheres could be intentionally staged. Intercultural and classical studies are instead especially interested in ancient and/or Eastern models of “in-between” life dimensions (like the Japanese *ki* or *ma*), which atmospheres

¹¹ Cf. also Schmidt and Jammers (2004), Reichardt (2009), Havik et al. (2013), Pfister (2011, 2013), Borsch (2014), Tidwell (2014), Weidinger (2014), Navarra (2014), Edensor and Sumartojo (2015), Sumartojo and Pink (2018).

¹² Starting from Turner’s saying “Atmosphere is my style” (extra-thing phenomena, intermittent apparitions, ephemeral effects like bright installations and land art, etc.).

¹³ Mahayni (2002), Blume (2005), Grant (2013).

¹⁴ Cf. Rodatz (2010), Schouten (2012), Welton (2012), Home-Cook (2015), Griffero (2019b, 175–188).

¹⁵ For a new phenomenology-based approach to lyrics, see Meyer-Sickendiek (2012).

¹⁶ See Hauskeller (1998, 1999, 2002), Blum (2010), Brünner et al. (2011), Institut f. immersive Medien (2013), Vilotic (2013), Brünner (2015), Ulber (2017), Hsu (2017).

might also be based on,¹⁷ while pedagogy seems increasingly prepared to acknowledge that atmospherically (and felt-bodily) (Wolf 2018) generated moods prove to be more educative than abstract methodological or content solutions.¹⁸ Ethnomusicology and aesthetics of music see the ineffable but moving in musical meaning (and soundscape) as an in-betweenness resulting in felt-relations and a kind of “we-felt-body”.¹⁹ These relations would be exemplarily based, in neo-phenomenological terms, on the sonic effect of presence and on the following solidary incorporation (dialogue between contraction and expansion) (Abels 2018b), whereas for others only sonic a-subjectivity and ineffability could really act as an ecological paradigm of every atmospheric experience (Vadén and Torvinen 2014).

It is well-known that psychopathology has become aware of atmospheres at least since Jaspers wrote that

the environment is somehow different, not to a gross degree, perception is unaltered in itself but there is some change which envelops everything with a subtle, pervasive and strangely uncertain light. A living room which formerly was felt as neutral or friendly now becomes dominated by some indefinable atmosphere. (Jaspers 1913, 98)

A certain psychopathology tries thus to better explain the clinical encounter through an atmosphere diagnosis, seeing it as an in-depth (and even aesthesiological) assessment of meanings transcending objective signs and symptoms.²⁰

While geography explains (good or bad) affectively charged spaces and one’s different attachment to places,²¹ politics and sociology interested in supra-individual emotions—at least since Durckheim’s “collective effervescence”—have focused especially on collective feelings permeating situations, community life and social structures as if they were real “emotional

¹⁷ Cf. Rappe (1995), Kimura (1995), Ogawa (2001, 93–106, 2011), Hisayama (2014), Rouquet (2016).

¹⁸ Cf. Bollnow (1968), Lüdtkke (1998), Schultheis (1998), Düttmann (2000), Hövel and Schüßler (2005), Wolf (2012, 2015, 2019), Bredmar (2013).

¹⁹ Cf. Abels (2013, 2018a), Riedel (2014, 2015), McGraw (2016).

²⁰ Cf. Fuchs (2000, 2013), Musikther (2005), Debus and Posner (2007), Sonntag (2013), Costa et al. (2014), Ratcliffe (2013), Francesetti (2015), Paduanello (2015–2016), Francesetti and Griffero (2019), Griffero (2019a).

²¹ Cf. Stewart (2007, 2011), Albertsen (2012), Gandy (2017).

regimes” (Reddy 2001).²² The assessment of the interplay among emotional culture, emotional climate and the more transitory emotional atmosphere²³ shows that affective situations are often more compelling than intellectual ideologies and, if well dramaturgically used, could even re-democratise our public spaces (Carter 2014). Based on the same premises, management and organisation studies, advertising and marketing research²⁴ sometimes try to precisely measure the influence of atmosphere on people’s behaviour (consumers, hotel guests, etc.) (Heide and Grønhaug 2006).

Lastly, ecological and social anthropology have been recently studying atmosphere as “lawscape” or spatial justice, meaning the struggle of various bodies (animated or not) to occupy a certain space at a certain time (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2014), or an everyday background force which people dwell into.²⁵ Others, instead, see atmosphere as the multi-species experience of places and environments and, through a meteorological-affective inquiry and a special view to materiality, aim at restoring light and its artificial extension²⁶ or the world’s inhabitants to the fullness of their weather-world,²⁷ sometimes making experiments with special things (like a stratospheric balloon) of kinetic atmospheres only made possible by changing and intersecting materialities (McCormack 2013, 2018).

In summary, it is possible to state that the humanities use the notion of atmosphere as an heuristic device to empirically research affects whenever an invisible effect seems disproportionate as compared with its visible causes and it proves necessary to pay attention to the vague and qualitative “something-more” that one experiences—in short, when it is necessary to focus more on expressive *qualia* and phenomenal *nuances* of appearing reality than on the detailed material reality. I know that all this

²² For a political (unfortunately mostly metaphorical) use of “atmosphere”, see Latour and Weibel (2005), Latour and Gagliardi (2006), Seyfert (2011). For a more phenomenological approach cf. Landweer (1999, 2007), Gugutzer (2012), Grossheim et al. (2014) and Runkel (2018).

²³ At least from De Rivera (1992) on.

²⁴ See Julmi (2015, 2017, 2018a, b). To give some example for marketing, cf. Donovan and Rossiter (1982), Bost (1987), Biehl-Missal and Sørensen (2012), Biehl-Missal (2013), Kazig (2013).

²⁵ See Stewart (2007, 2011), Morton (2007, 160–169).

²⁶ Cf. Bille et al. (2015), Bille (2015, 2017), Bille and Sørensen (2016). But see also the pioneering approach to environmentally atmospheres in terms of sense-tonic effects by Hellpach (1911, 1946).

²⁷ See Ingold (2011, 2015, 73–78), Schroer and Schmitt (2017).

is only a drop in the ocean and I have almost certainly forgotten to mention many things. But I think I have provided at least an idea of the incredibly large impact of the concept of atmosphere on the humanities: it ends up resembling a genie that flew out of the bottle and, once settled in the cultural sphere, cannot be put back inside. Now it is time to turn to the pioneering role played by philosophy.

2 WHY RIGHT NOW?

But how did we get here? How did we come to reasonably assume the existence of a more specific “atmospheric turn”?²⁸ This is obviously part of a broader and—like any alleged cultural “turn”—highly contentious “affective turn” (Clough and Halley 2007) which has recently arisen in the humanities from the ashes of the linguistic one and from the failure of both the cognitivist deceptive primacy of mental states and the alleged omniexplicative model of data processing. Although in a context still lacking a reference paradigm and a specific cultural-theoretical vocabulary for studying emotional life (Massumi 1995, 88), the concept of “atmosphere” has made a brilliant career and can hardly be only explained by a sort of “bandwagon effect”.

Now, if the viability of a theory and the career of a concept which set themselves up as “new” do not irrefutably prove their scientific and innovative character, they are, however, facts that should not be underestimated. The fact that certain phenomena previously expressed by a different (or no) word may not now suddenly be called otherwise is perhaps not only a semantic shift but a real change in the overall historical *Affektkomplex* (to use Spitzer’s term). What is new is surely the extent to which the atmospheric “discourse” has become generalised through wide sectors of humanistic culture and applied more easily than the Spinozist-Deleuzian interpretation of affect (which sees it as a force expressed only by ubiquitous bodily intensities), which through its two variants (process-metaphysics and lifestyle activism)²⁹ has notoriously resulted in all the so-called affect studies.

²⁸ Cf. Soentgen (1998, 72–73), Seyfert (2011, 76–79), Schützeichel (2015).

²⁹ For some arguments in favour of the latter, see Slaby (2018, 78–79).

“Where” were atmospheres, in other words, before they were theoretically “discovered” in philosophy by Hermann Schmitz³⁰ and in psychiatry by Hubertus Tellenbach (1968)? This preliminary question obviously sounds a bit realistic since it excludes both the transcendental-constructivist claim that every alleged “discovered” thing is simply created and conditioned by the author’s background feelings³¹ and the less ambitious claim that something never exists, properly speaking, before being consciously perceived. In my opinion, an unfolding becomes possible if and only if there is first a “fold” (what “atmosphere” means) that is not constructed but autonomously offered to one’s interest. Everyone knows the traditional conflict between phenomenological descriptivism and historical-philosophical narrative. My decision to trace back the recent rapid career of “atmosphere” to a certain *Zeitgeist* is thus rather theoretically problematic, especially for a phenomenological approach suspicious towards a philosophy of culture based on the model of great narratives and therefore implying a (positive or negative) teleology.

However, even a sober bird’s-eye reflection on “atmosphere” should try to explain the reasons for its great success, thus addressing the “lack of robust historiographies” (Gandy 2017, 33) within the debate on atmospheres in the English-speaking world. Today’s boom of atmospheres might also be just the attempt to express the same old thing in other terms, that is, the omnipresence of a basic attunement that, opening to the world, influences everyone’s situatedness and well-being while also pre-structuring experiences of things and cognitive states.³² It might mean the same all-encompassing world-orientation previously expressed by equally “fuzzy” and ill-defined concepts like *aura*, *Stimmung*, *ambiance*, *genius loci*,³³ that is, by affective concepts. In my opinion, however, such concepts are productive precisely thanks to their semantic-linguistic

³⁰ First timidly (Schmitz 1965, 40–41) and then, from 1969 on, clearly and thematically more effectively.

³¹ The soft yet buck-passing version of this claim is the catch-all theory of co-evolutionary dynamics of language-culture and body-affectivity.

³² An idea developed under the term of mood (*Stimmung*) and affective situation (*Befindlichkeit*) by Heidegger from 1927 on (1927, 1929–30), Bollnow (1941) and recently by Ratcliffe (2008), but also, with more causal-physical details (background feelings), by Damasio (1999).

³³ On these forerunners cf. Spitzer (1942, 1963). For a specific reinterpretation of *genius loci* as a place radiating a special atmosphere cf. Kozljanič (2004, II, 321–340) and Griffero (2019b, 137–149).

vagueness: they are not only abstract ideal-typical categories unsuccessfully trying to systematise more chaotic and dynamic feelings (cf. Musil 1943, 1259–1279, for example) and distinguishing them as if they were “absolutely individual things” or “eternal and sacred psychic entities” (James 1890, II, 449).

Before answering to this objection I would stress that there are, for me, basically two options. The first is that atmospheres have always existed even before Schmitz and Tellenbach brought them to light, thereby clarifying a confused semantic sphere and especially building a new field of investigation.³⁴ The second is that the turn shows a phenomenon that has remained only implicit until now and that has been made fully possible precisely by today’s economic-political situation (late-capitalist, image- and information-based economy)³⁵ and/or by the overcoming of a previous linguistic-interpretative paradigm.

Let us briefly examine the second option using first Sloterdijk’s highly questionable but suggestive spherological (not phenomenological) approach. The philosopher stresses the present need of an (onto)atmospheric explication of current and multifocal forms of immunity from mimetic contagion, given that in the nineteenth century the metaphysical all-encompassing monospheres, with their only imagined immunological nature (bubbles and globes), have collapsed and been replaced by more chaotic foams (Sloterdijk 1998–2004). In so doing, he outlines an ontoclimatology that can consciously look at the milieu and the being-in-the-world only after the ecological crisis and the rediscovery of ephemeral and no longer monothematic *Erlebnis*- and scene-societies (in general pushed to a levitation atmosphere). When he anthropogenetically assumes that human beings always “create” both their place and atmospheres, which are first ecstatic and only later become residential situations, by ultimately projecting them outside of the protective maternal inside environment, he goes, however, in the direction opposite to (our) neo-phenomenological emotional externalism.

According to Sloterdijk, Modernity theoretically focuses on atmospheres, thus making explicit the implicit also in this case,³⁶ only when it becomes aware of the risk that the atmosphere may be manipulated or

³⁴ Obviously starting not *ex nihilo* but from twentieth century’s philosophy of affect in its hermeneutical (Dilthey), fundamental-ontological (Heidegger), psychological (Geiger) and anthropological (Bollnow) variants.

³⁵ In belittling and not completely acceptable terms Henckmann (2007, 76) says that the theory of atmosphere is nothing but one of superfluous needs of our affluent society.

³⁶ Schützzeichel (2015, 61) calls it an “implicit turn”.

become unlivable (“atmoterrorism”, alarmist weather reports and breaking news, etc.). Modernity replaces the lifeworld with a climatic technique or with air-conditioning, without anachronistic regrets for a naïve perceptual dimension and for an alleged natural unification, but bravely joining the “experimental age” based on “climate control” and on mixing humans and non-humans together (see Latour 2003).

One less known and yet more intriguing statement of Sloterdijk’s is that today’s attention to atmospheres is part of the greater attention to the vegetative sphere (one’s moods, skills and even diseases) made possible by a surplus of waking time. This surplus would really enable not only luxury and everyday aesthetics but also atmospheres both as lived experiences and as possible subjects of analysis. It is interesting to note that whereas Heidegger, with his phenomenology of boredom as a basic *Stimmung*, “conservatively” aimed at overcoming the levitated existence, characterised by the inability to be really moved by something, through a new mission, Sloterdijk suggests looking at today’s central role of moods and atmospheres exactly as the result of the “comfort greenhouse” of the affluent society, of its contagious demand for superfluous³⁷ and of privileged access to “where” and “how” one feels oneself.

After this partly only metaphorical understanding of the notion one should point out that its boom fits well with the most recent rediscovery of the central role of moods (*Stimmungen*)³⁸ and presentness. According to Gumbrecht (2003, 2012a, b, 2014), today’s relevance of “effects of presence (and, among them, atmospheres and moods)” marks the crisis of “constructivism” and of the “linguistic turn”—to use his words—of “ontologies of literature based on the paradigm of representation” (Gumbrecht 2012b, 20). All this

might have something to do with an everyday mode of being-in-the-world that, for most of us, fuses consciousness and software—one that suspends the experience of presence, so to speak. Perhaps this state of withdrawal has provoked an enhanced need—and an increased desire—for encounters with presence. [...] I am interested in the atmospheres and moods that literary works absorb as a form of “life”—an environment with physical substance, which “touches us as if from inside.” The yearning for *Stimmung* has grown,

³⁷ Henckmann (2007, 76, 80) claims that today’s obscurantist interest in atmospheres, defined as a “swarm of unreal ghosts” (!) produced through a dangerous game, exactly proves that their cultural removal was and is the healthy means to the self-preservation of humankind.

³⁸ Cf. Pfäler and Wiese (2018) for a recent report on this “revival”.

because many of us—perhaps older people, above all—suffer from existence in an everyday world that often fails to surround and envelop us physically. Yearning for atmosphere and mood is a yearning for presence—perhaps a variant that presupposes a pleasure in dealing with the cultural past. (Gumbrecht 2012b, 7.; 20)

Anyway, more than seeing the career of atmospheres as another great narrative (the growing evidence of something of which we have long been unaware), I would argue that they became both a thematically perceived experience and a topic worthy of consideration when, according to the historical-cultural logic of a pendulum movement,³⁹ something in the “air” had changed. Utopian philosophies have thus been replaced, also on the background of the so-called spatial turn, by philosophies more oriented to spatial and temporal presentness; genial-subjective arts with their semantical and representational contents have been replaced by a-subjective and more immersive aesthetic experiences; lastly, rational social ways of life have been replaced by forms of well-being and a sense of community giving new emphasis to prereflexive-affective experience against today’s otherwise dominant social isolation. Paraphrasing Musil, “periods rich in emotion [or atmosphere] and poor in emotion have succeeded one another” (1943, 1259). Which sufficiently proves, by contrast, also the failure of the early academic reception, in the sixties and seventies, of Tellenbach’s and Schmitz’s not well-timed suggestions.

3 IN SEARCH OF FORERUNNERS

Without going into details,⁴⁰ it is evident that the notion of atmosphere has not come out of nowhere and has its forerunners in other notions. The first which should be considered is Benjamin’s “aura”, understood as the unrepeatability of something that is distant and inaccessible, however close it may be, and that, unlike traces, returns our gaze to the point of taking possession of us (Benjamin 1973, 184, 216; 1999, 447). An equally important role is played by Léon Daudet’s *ambiance* (1928)—understood as a subliminal (especially cutaneous) sensorium by which a usually (individual and collective) inexplicable influence could be better

³⁹ It could also be argued, ironically, that an increasingly refined cognitivist approach also brings to attention its blind spots, in this case the affective sphere. See Parkinson et al. (1996, 23–24).

⁴⁰ For the first authors mentioned here (Benjamin, Daudet, Otto, Simmel), see Griffiero (2010, 55–59; 2013, 31–32; 2014).

explained—as well as by Rudolf Otto’s “numinous” and Georg Simmel’s notion of *Stimmung*, which he applied to many different contexts (*in primis* to landscape and odour).

I think it would be more useful here, however, to mention less known sources like, for example, Otto Baensch’s theory of feelings. Baensch considers subjective feelings as always intertwined with objective feelings, that is, imponderable and global affective-qualitative states (or *Stimmungen*) that are felt by a perceiver but that things, landscapes and especially works of art do not only express but rather “have” outside, in a sense, thus influencing one’s perception and thought and even, in the form of atmospheres of feeling, many historical facts (Baensch 1923, 12, 14, 24–26).

The idea of work of art as an atmosphere is then well outlined in Mikel Dufrenne’s phenomenological aesthetics. His use of the concept “might have had” yet more impact if he had deeply focused on it. According to Dufrenne, a work of art expresses

less a world than the atmosphere of a world, in the sense that we say an atmosphere is tense or lively. Thus it is a matter of a certain quality of objects or of beings, but a quality which does not belong to them in their own right, since it is not they that bring it about. The quality in question is like a supervening or impersonal principle in accordance with which we say that there is an electric atmosphere or, as Trenet sang, that there is joy in the air. This principle is embodied in individuals or in things. It is somewhat like the collective consciousness which governs individual consciousness in times of agitation. Whether or not it is a principle of explanation, it is at any rate a reality that we feel keenly when we come into contact with the group from which it emanates. We have much the same experience in a dark forest. It seems to us that individual shadows are not the result of shade, but, on the contrary, that the shadows create the leafy summits and the entanglement of underbrush along with the entire vegetable mass in its damp mystery. The forest prevents us from seeing the tree, and the forest itself is seen only through its atmosphere. (Dufrenne 1953, 168)

A lot of what could be said today about an artistic (and not only) atmosphere can already be found here, albeit in an undeveloped form.⁴¹ Dufrenne makes it clear that an atmosphere is a global affective impression

⁴¹ Even a non-pathic author like Adorno recognises that something auratic-ephemeral beyond the artwork’s elements and factual reality is “an objective determination of the artwork” and should be conserved even in non-atmospheric works “as a negated and shunned element” (Adorno 1970, 274).

or affect “which orients our comprehension by organizing the sense of all that we will see or hear” (Dufrenne 1953, 450), even a unitary *Weltanschauung* or world-atmosphere that, directing itself as a potential and vague backdrop to the diegetic foreground, acts a supervenience, an irradiation that can never be reduced to “the objective sphere of significations” (1953, 211), to the sum of its parts or to some linguistic description:

The soft, delicate tranquillity which is expressed by the interiors of Vermeer is not contained between the walls which the painting encloses. It radiates upon an infinity of absent objects and constitutes the visage of a world of which it is the potentiality. [...] An atmosphere [...] diffuses itself, not because it is ungraspable, but because it has the positive power of extending itself beyond the particular objects of which it is the quality and of drawing other objects to it in order to disclose itself through them. [...] This world is not crowded with objects; it precedes them. It is like a faint light in which they are revealed and in which everything that is perceptible in this light is disclosed or, if one prefers, like an atmosphere in which all those things that can display themselves are revealed. (Dufrenne 1953, 181–182)

Another less known source is the philosophical climatology (begun maybe with Herder) developed by Tetsuro Watsuji’s book *Fudo* (*A Climate*). Aiming at clarifying the function of climate as a factor within the structure of human existence, the author explains feeling as a non-subjective and non-dualistic intentionality. For example, given that an atmosphere is something which “stands outside” but through which one understands oneself, the cold and the self can never be distinguished when one feels cold (Watsuji 1935, 3). Let us read his words:

One morning we may find ourselves “in a revived mood”. This is interpreted in terms of specific temperature and humidity conditions influencing us externally and inducing internally a revived mental condition. But the facts are quite different, for what we have here is not a mental state but the freshness of the external atmosphere. But the object that is understood in terms of the temperature and the humidity of the atmosphere has not the slightest similarity with the freshness itself. This freshness is a state; it appertains to the atmosphere but it is neither the atmosphere itself nor a property of the atmosphere. It is not that we have certain states imposed on us by the atmosphere; the fact that the atmosphere possesses a state of freshness is that we ourselves feel revived. We discover ourselves, that is, in the atmosphere.

But the freshness of the atmosphere is not that of a mental state, as is shown best by the fact that the morning feeling of freshness is embodied and expressed directly in our mutual greetings. We comprehend ourselves in this freshness of the atmosphere, for what is fresh is not our own mental state but the atmosphere itself. So we do not need to go through the process of examining others' mental states to be able to greet each other with “Isn't it a lovely morning?”. Such climatic burdens or impositions occur very frequently in our life. (1935, 14–15)

I have emphasised here some minor authors (Baensch, Dufrenne, Watsuji) only to show that the prehistory of “atmosphere” might be further explored and might reserve some surprises. After these few detours, however, I must go back on track and look at the notion's career from a philosophical point of view.

4 ATMOSPHERES SPREAD THEIR WINGS

An atmospheric feeling is hard to define not because it is rare but, on the contrary, because it is omnipresent, even though at times it goes unnoticed and seems ephemeral. One speaks of atmospheres every time some effects seem to be out of proportion with respect to their causes and cannot be precisely defined; every time a “background hum” (Stewart 2011, 449) acts as a presentiment of larger looming events, without that necessarily meaning that this intensity is totally irreducible to function and meaning, something absolutely “unqualified” and “as such [...] not ownable or recognizable, and [...] resistant to critique” (Massumi 1995, 88). Things are less emphatically “metaphysical”, indeed. The relative ineffability of atmospheres only depends on the fact that one has to be “in” them to really feel and understand them, and no list of linguistic characteristics can ever be exhaustive for them.⁴² In short, they are not meaningless only because they can do without linguistic-propositional thoughts.⁴³

⁴²For an outdoor atmosphere, for example, is it really enough to talk (as Tucker Cross 2004, 30, does) about attachment, outdoor enjoyment, aesthetics, sustainability, social interaction?

⁴³Which are certainly not the only ones having cognitive value within a non-intellectualistic cognitivism: suffice it to think what Solomon (2003, 16) calls “judgements of the body”, not to mention Heidegger's overlapping of affective situation and understanding.

Place identity, townscape, charisma, left-wing (or right-wing) “winds” blowing in the country, expressive irradiation of materials, moods specifically conjured up by a meeting, a day, a month, an hour of the day, a certain weather.⁴⁴ Well, in all these and many other cases one is referring to a natural or social atmospherisation, thus meaning a qualitative and vague “something-more” (Tellenbach 1968, 47) (a *je-ne-sais-quoi*, which not surprisingly was a key concept of pre-Kantian aesthetics) that reveals itself to be particularly attractive for those who are interested more in the expressive *qualia* and phenomenal *nuances* of appearing reality (the pathic “how”) than in the detailed material reality (the gnostic “what”) (Straus 1935), more in the mythical-dramatic dimension of a world emotionally perceived through its physiognomic characters than in what intellect can objectively find in it.⁴⁵

But we must be aware that, as a colloquial term, “atmosphere” is largely dependent on the context and the speaker. Without the addition of qualifying adjectives, it works sometimes as a neutral-descriptive title (e.g. “what is the atmosphere like in that restaurant?”), sometimes as an objection to an only decorative background (“the film evokes a good atmosphere” often means that the plot is not so good) and sometimes even as an *ipso facto* favourable feeling (“what an atmosphere!”).⁴⁶ Despite its unavoidable vagueness,⁴⁷ which only one who is not able to appreciate the ephemeral nuances of reality might stigmatise, “atmosphere” usually means a feeling (relaxed, oppressive, gloomy, etc.) that is not private and internal, but poured out into the perceiver’s pericorporeal (lived, pre-dimensional) space, and “tinges” their situation to the point that it felt-bodily influences their attitude, behaviour and (even) thought.⁴⁸

⁴⁴The climatic acts as a paradigmatic example of any climated feeling (at least before it was domesticated in measurable meteorological terms) because of its widespread holistic nature as well as the affective qualified pressure it exerts (Henckmann 2007, 48–49). For an overview of the literature on political ecology of atmosphere and air, even as a marker of socio-spatial difference, cf. Gandy (2017).

⁴⁵Thanks to a mythical perception “whatever is seen or felt is surrounded by a special *atmosphere*—an atmosphere of joy or grief, of anguish, of excitement, of exultation or depression” (Cassirer 1944, 102–103; my italics).

⁴⁶For the still little-explored feeling of persuasiveness which the syllogistic so-called atmospheric effect is based on cf. Woodworth and Sells (1935).

⁴⁷The best semantic analysis of the notion is maybe contained in Rauh (2012, 133–157).

⁴⁸“Feeling [...] is not something that I possess, because, if anything, it is the feeling that possesses me”. Thus, “instead of ‘I’m sad’, it would be better to say ‘Sadness overwhelmed me’” (Klages 1976, 349; 1979, 449).

One always knows that saying, for example, “there is something in the air” (tension or calm, for instance) implies the existence of powerful affective realities one dwells in, or, within a narrower scope, that “in some cases, the place, more specifically the atmosphere of the place, is more influential than the product itself in the purchase decision” (Kotler 1973–1974, 48). However, only in the last twenty years has atmosphere become a philosophical-scientific theme,⁴⁹ precisely since when Hermann Schmitz’s neo-phenomenological use of atmospheric feelings in opposition to dualism (Christian-Platonist and Cartesian) began to be recognised thirty years after its first formulation. This atmospheric turn is ontologically quite ambitious, and not only because it considers the neuroscientific and culturalist approach unable to explain the depth of emotional life.⁵⁰ It gives feelings a central role in everyday life, thus starting a campaign of radical de-psychologisation of emotional life. As already mentioned, this new (theoretical) and anti-introjectionist sense of atmospheres, which certainly goes beyond their functional conception both as evolutionary adaptive reactions to the environment and as cognitive and aggregating forces in social practices,⁵¹ was systematically introduced only by psychiatrist Hubertus Tellenbach (1968) and philosopher Hermann Schmitz (at least from 1969 on).⁵²

Hubertus Tellenbach defines atmosphere as that “something-more” that one perceives in others, especially through oral senses (olfaction and taste).⁵³ If humans or, better, all organic beings⁵⁴ emanate and smell feelings through odours (custodians of a mnemonic value, too), the therapist

⁴⁹For an introduction to this recent career, see Spitzer (1942, 1963), Griffèro (2010, 2018a, b), Thibaud (2015, 13–43), Runkel (2016) and Gandy (2017).

⁵⁰As even neuroscience- and evolution-oriented authors have to recognise: see Ciompi and Endert (2011, 36).

⁵¹This is true, although it should be recognised that distinguishing an atmosphere from one’s own mood necessarily also presupposes a process of socialisation; social situations and atmospheres are intrinsically linked, according to models like the hermeneutic circle or Weizsäcker’s Gestaltkreis (Julmi 2018b, 119–120).

⁵²Cf. especially Schmitz (1969, 1998, 2007, 2014). For an independent and more social-biological-oriented approach to atmospheric affects (probably overestimated by Anglophone literature), see Brennan (2004).

⁵³Hence the somewhat superfluous debate on the most atmospheric sense, whose only useful outcome is that it “democratises” the traditional sensorial hierarchy. On the atmospheric relevance of smell, cf. Diaconu (2006), Stenslund (2015).

⁵⁴Tellenbach’s claim (1968, 47) that inorganic entities could radiate an atmosphere only if linking to a “human factor” seems questionable to me.

should be able to quickly “smell” the imponderable atmosphere of others. A person is healthy when they can count on the protective and trust-based sphere derived from a good oral neonatal atmospherisation; instead, one has a disease when the aberration of one’s oral sense works as a form of protest against every atmospheric attunement.⁵⁵ Atmospheric smell not only is an effective diagnostic tool for psychic diseases⁵⁶ but makes every prejudicial (in the non-evaluative sense of the word) and emotional-fusional understanding possible, thus showing itself as the very medium of any intersubjectivity.

Based on an anti-reductionistic neo-phenomenology of the felt-body (*Leib*) and on a philosophy understood as a person’s self-reflection on the way in which they feel and orientate,⁵⁷ Hermann Schmitz conceives of all feelings as atmospheres. This way, partially following Ludwig Klages’ theory of original images’ resonance in the soul,⁵⁸ he rehabilitates the archaic and early-Homeric idea of feelings as powers (demons) poured out into a non(geometrical) localisable space.⁵⁹ Because of the dominance of the psychologist-introjectionist-reductionist paradigm (from the fifth century BC on), based on reducing the world only to quantifiable entities and introjecting all feelings into a “black box”⁶⁰ called psyche (then eventually projected onto the outside),⁶¹ the concept of subject-independent atmospheric feelings was completely lost. The same fate happened to the notion of felt-body (*Leib*) as irreducible to the physical one and as condition of possibility of a communication with the world that is far from merely phys-

⁵⁵ Starting from the feeling (perplexity and derealisation) that precedes (precisely like an atmospheric clouding) or accompanies the development of schizophrenic delusions.

⁵⁶ Tellenbach explores some pathological pre-psychotic *Erlebnisse* of the oral sense: from the less serious disorders (decrease in taste and smell intensity) to the much more severe ones (receptive disorders), when “the atmospheric can no longer affectively pervade the individual” (Tellenbach 1968, 127), resulting in a loss of smell receptivity (*Entstimmung*) or a despondency caused by one’s own (even only alleged) bad smell (*Verstimmung*).

⁵⁷ See Schmitz (2019).

⁵⁸ See Grossheim (1994) and Griffèro (2016c).

⁵⁹ A very similar but fully independent (polytheistic) view is held by Dreyfus and Kelly (2011).

⁶⁰ It follows that nobody can then explain how, from this alleged inner-private psychical world, they could get out and acquire a reliable knowledge of the external world.

⁶¹ A very naïve idea (Krebs 2018, 248–249), whose more sophisticated version aims at explaining apparent external feelings as a wrong interpretation, that is, through a quasi-Fichtean projectivist theory as a kind of feedback coming from a previous and unconscious projection (emotional, in this case) (Bulka 2015, 291), or, at least, as the posthumous effect of a forgotten intersubjective feeling.

iological transmission (cf. Griffero 2017a, b). As affective powers, atmospheres would exist discontinuously, but objectively and authoritatively filling and qualifying a certain surfaceless spatial situation, thus deeply involving a perceiver thanks to felt-bodily qualities common both to perceived forms and to the perceiver (suggestions of movement, synaesthetic qualities).

In the 1990s, a soft but much more internationally influential version of this anti-projectivist and anti-introjectionist conception of atmospheric feelings and their felt-bodily resonance was provided by philosopher Gernot Böhme.⁶² By compensating (so to speak) for the Schmitzean underestimation of sociocultural factors and overcoming the intellectualism of classical aesthetics and its restriction to art, he places atmosphere at the centre first of an ecological aesthetics⁶³ and then of a new aesthetics (or *Asthetik*), now understood as a general theory of affective and involving perception. Unlike Schmitz, Böhme places staging atmospheres at the centre of an “aesthetic work” (art in the strict sense, but also cosmetics, advertising, design, scenography, interior decoration, acoustic furnishing, etc.) and sees stage design as an emblematic character of late-capitalist “aesthetic economy”. This replaces the more traditional use- and exchange-values with the stage-value⁶⁴ and material labour with an immaterial labour relying centrally on the—capitalistically oppressing but also potentially freeing—production and reproduction (or manipulation)

⁶² See, at least, Böhme (1989, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2017a, b) and, for felt-bodily resonance, Griffero (2016b, 2017b).

⁶³ For an aesthetic approach that is relatively independent of Böhme and at least partly anti-projectivistic, see also Seel (1996, 2005). For him there are three (co-existing but also potentially conflicting) kinds of aesthetic appearance (mere appearance, atmospheric appearance, artistic appearance) and, as a consequence, three kinds of perception (atmospheric-corresponsive awareness would be intermediate between the purely contemplative one and the strictly artistic one). For him, atmosphere is not an ineffable quasi-thing, but a “character” that objects and styles do not express but rather “have”, in other words, “a sensuously and affectionally perceptible (and, in this respect, existentially significant) articulation of realised or *nonrealised* life possibilities” (Seel 2005, 92; my emphasis). In my view, this “corresponsive” modality, understood as perceiving a “temporary shape to our life”, risks relativistically circumscribing itself to a conscious existential affinity, maybe too much derived—despite Seel’s rightly insistence on presentness—from biography-, culture- and imagination-conditioned situations.

⁶⁴ An atmospherologic economy should maybe start by analysing how the atmosphere of faith sometimes, through self-fulfilling prophecies, has more economic impact than financial data.

of affects.⁶⁵ As a primary object of an “ingressive” perception, the atmosphere is a quasi-objective being responsible for one’s feeling well (or not) in a space that is an “in-between” (between perceiver and perceived) and a felt-bodily co-presence.⁶⁶ Only by better understanding atmospheric phenomena as wholes but also as ecstatic qualities that things radiate around them (see Böhme 2017b, 37–54), especially by examining their different possible generators (movement impressions, synaesthesia, scenes, social characters, etc.), can one gain a greater atmospheric “competence” and be thus able to also develop a (all the more necessary) critical theory of aestheticisation.

Thus the die was cast. Böhme (2017b, 31) explored, on the one hand, how aesthetic workers can “make” atmospheres (or, at least, the conditions in which they might appear), without being hostage of any moralistic stance,⁶⁷ and, on the other, how perceivers may not be fully manipulated by them, yet without harbouring the illusion that atmospheres can be fully controlled. In this way he contributed significantly to the successful theoretical career of atmospheres in today’s media-world and “diffused design”.⁶⁸ At this stage, since the 1990s, “atmosphere” has really spread its wings, replacing the previously very widespread concept of *Stimmung* or mood.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ “What is created in the networks of affective labor is a form-of-life [...] Labor works directly on the affects; it produces subjectivity, it produces society, it produces life. Affective labor, in this sense, is ontological” (Hardt 1999, 98–99).

⁶⁶ The only seemingly crucial objection is that one always perceives a particular quality (a tension) rather than the quality of something universal (a tense atmosphere) (Henckmann 2007, 55–56). I find it a little superfluous. There would be nothing strange in saying that one, for example, sees a colour rather than seeing red (it depends on the kind of question); nobody, however, would say they feel an atmosphere, full stop, unless, as already mentioned, they want to express something else, namely, something intrinsically positive.

⁶⁷ Like the one according to which, fortunately, the “generation of atmospheres does not (yet) work too good” (Henckmann 2007, 81), or “there is, after all, a vanishingly small distance between rising as one with the crowd at a baseball game and rising as one with the crowd at a Hitler rally” (Dreyfus and Kelly 2011, 241).

⁶⁸ “Atmospheres are involved wherever something is being staged, wherever design is a factor—and that now means: almost everywhere” (Böhme 2017a, 29). The risk that in a cultural differentiated world this global atmosphere could also work as an anaesthetising superlanguage must not yet be forgotten (Knodt 1994, 39–69; 2017).

⁶⁹ Which is, not by chance, the only concept present in Barck’s dictionary (cf. Wellbery 2003).

5 AN INFLATIONISTIC PROPOSAL ABOUT THE ABILITY TO GENERATE ATMOSPHERES

Böhme’s idea of a partial atmosphere’s intentional producibility is at the centre of a philosophically interesting debate with Hermann Schmitz’s radical anti-intentionalist perspective (cf. Schmitz 1998, 2003, 243–261). According to the latter, by “making” atmospheres our solipsistic society only aims at manipulating “actual impressive situations” for superficial, propagandistic and/or advertising purposes. Moreover, saying that one atmospherically perceives ecstasies of single things would mean making a double mistake, because situations, as the *prius* of any perception, are a chaotic-multiple significance and not made up of single objects (“singularist” mistake) at a first impression, and atmospheric perception in turn cannot be explained as a signal transmission (sender/receiver model mistake).

Even if partially based on misunderstandings, the contrast productively brings to light two different paradigmatic positions referring to both (a) what people can intentionally produce in the affective sphere and (b) today’s aestheticisation of everyday life, stigmatised by Schmitz as a misleading propaganda and welcomed instead by Böhme as the unavoidable reflection of a more general “theatricalisation of our life” (Böhme 2017a, 33). Schmitz’s criticism⁷⁰ should yet be taken seriously, at least as a “regulative idea” that rightly casts a shadow over the rhetorical generation of feelings and, more generally, warns us against the illusion that one can create everything.

This criticism continues and honours a tradition that, putting in Aristotelian contrast what grows by itself (nature) and what is made by human beings (artefacts), sees the intentional production of attunements and atmospheres as (a) the mistake of a sentimentalist dilettantism only focused on the feeling experienced through the work of art rather than on the works’ values (Geiger 1911), (b) something impossible because *Stimmungen* and atmospheres belong to a preconscious sphere prior to the subject/world dualism which one cannot produce but, at best, “awaken” (Heidegger),⁷¹ (c) only an instrumental emotional hygiene that

⁷⁰ His stigmatisation, however, (a) is partially conflicting with the—elsewhere recognised—capability of cultivating atmospheres in a closed space in a non-manipulative way, (b) wrongly downgrades the rhetorical *coté* of the aesthetic tradition and, finally, (c) implies an axiology that does not clearly distinguish between fake and simply bad atmospheres.

⁷¹ “All making conscious means destroying, altering in each case, whereas in awakening an attunement we are concerned to let this attunement be as it is, as this attunement” (Heidegger 1929–30, 65).

is seriously unethical in perverting life's earnestness or, more trivially, gives life to kitsch persons and demagogic situations (Bollnow)⁷² and lastly (d) a fundamentally rhetorical-propagandistic technique of impression (*Eindruckstechnik*) designed to transform segmented situations into impressive ones (*Plakatsituationen*), characterised by accentuated and artificial pathic-semantic contours (Schmitz 1998, 2003, 243–261).

These argumentations-objections sound like Hugo von Hofmannsthal's definition of feelings—they are neither “outer” nor “inner”, and yet one must find oneself outside oneself—and his emphasis on the “outside”: the “outside is where we are, outside!” It is the same outside that Staiger (1946, 13–87) expects from lyrical poetry, understood more as a secular mystic (under Heidegger's influence) than a *Stimmung*-inwardness entanglement (in a Hegelian sense). For Staiger, the lyrical poet does nothing as such but lets themselves go to an at least initially external (as such neither only inside nor only outside), unintentional and occasional atmospheric flow, thus evoking a *Stimmung* without directly communicating it and rather preparing the perceiver to it.

Provided that Schmitz's and Böhme's theories are not necessarily forking paths, it is time I throw my own hat in the ring and submit my “modest proposal” now. It poses fewer problems, since it is based on an (phenomenological as well as ontological) inflationary distinction among three kinds of atmospheres, with their respective spatial and relatively objective dimensions.⁷³ Smoothing Schmitz's rough edges and urbanising his approach (so to speak), it could be said that there are (a) prototypical-groundless atmospheres, which are objective, external, unintentional (in the sense of not wilfully produced), sometimes lacking a precise name and

⁷² Bollnow (1941, 59, 132, 140, 152–153). The kitsch-person would be anyone who intentionally generates *Stimmungen* for themselves or for others (Giesz 1971, 44). The risk of designing (and perceiving) an atmosphere only as cosiness (*Gemütlichkeit*) and thus bordering on kitsch always needs to be kept in mind.

⁷³ Which does not rule out other possible distinctions, based, for example, on different intensity and duration. But every distinction, for example, Bulka's one among things-driven, space-bound and scenery-immanent atmospheres (Bulka 2015, 332), Meyer-Sickendiek's one (2012, 40–41, 75–76) among existential, atmospheric and social situations (as well as among latent, foregrounding and atmospheric *Stimmungen*) and also Hasse's one (2014, 235–237)—atmospheres not plannable through human action, those that are a product of social processes and lastly those which are media of felt-bodily communication—gains in credibility for me only when it's understood as an affective *continuum*.

related to space of vastness exactly like *Stimmungen*,⁷⁴ then (b) derivative-relational atmospheres, that is, objective and external feelings that are intentionally produced (at least in part), related to directional space and somehow conditioned by a subject-object relationship. Finally, there are also (3) quite spurious-idiosyncratic atmospheres, which are relatedness-conditioned, subjective, even projective and also placed in local space (Griffero 2010, 144).

It is only an ideal-typical distinction, of course, which should be fluidly seen as if it were a “reversible image”, provided that not only can the three types be reciprocally intertwined, but each of them may also turn into another under certain conditions.⁷⁵ The first advantage of this distinction is that it is more faithful to one’s actual experience. Moreover, while preserving Schmitz’s idea of transcendent and totally man-independent atmospheres (the prototypical ones) and Böhme’s intention to mitigate their overly random nature and to bind them as strongly as possible to objectual poles (the derivative ones), it does not exclude the more subjective-projective atmospheres aroused by single things and situations either (the spurious ones).

Indeed, if there were only prototypical atmospheres,⁷⁶ as such partly overlapping with *Stimmungen*, instead of a real continuum of atmospheres whose extreme poles are the prototypic and the spurious ones, it would be hard to understand not only how atmospheres could (or should, which is not the same) be produced, but also the reasons for their boom in the humanities.

⁷⁴Learning a lot from the discussion on *Stimmungen* as feeling without objectual focus; also, atmospherology limits as much as possible the dependence of feelings on different intentional contents or formal objects. Schmitz does not make only a distinction between non-directional atmospheric feelings (pure excitements like joy or sadness, nostalgia or the spring mood) and directional ones (either all-directional or centripetal/centrifugal), but especially, using Metzger’s gestalt-psychological terms (Metzger 1941), shows that what appears to be their intentional object is rather only the sphere of condensation of that feeling, probably separate from their real anchoring point (their real generative location). Even without overlooking the anti-interioristic value of these suggestions (on which see Landweer 2011), it may be best for atmospherology to consider intentionality in a non-mentalistic sense, that is, not as an inner representation of the world but as a necessary openness to it (see Slaby 2011, 24), in other words, in the anonymous “operative” (as a taking part) rather than “acting” sense, as Merleau-Ponty (1945) claims.

⁷⁵I am sensitive here to the need of avoiding monocausal explanations, and I am ready to admit that ephemeral and occasional atmospheres can get condensed into stable and prototypic ones (and vice versa) and so on.

⁷⁶Which are obviously easier to perceive than the more diffuse ones insofar as they normally overturn some previous (affective) situation.

6 ATMOSPHEROLOGY PLAYS ITS CARDS

Keeping this distinction in mind while focusing on the ontological nature of prototypical atmospheres, I'd like to provide a short overview of my own atmospherology and pathic aesthetics.

(a) First of all, it highlights affective appearance *qua talis*, without addressing the genetic issue ("in what series of events does this atmospheric feeling occur?") or the causal one ("what is the cause of this atmospheric feeling?"). Therefore it privileges the holistic "first impressions"⁷⁷ of what surrounds us and acts passively-synthetically on us, like half-entities (or quasi-things) (cf. Griffiero 2013). The first impression precedes and (in a certain sense) inhibits analysis, influencing our emotional situation from the outset, resisting any representative objectivation and, *a fortiori*, any conscious attempt at projective adaptation (prototypic atmospheres are cognitively impenetrable). As an influential (almost numinous) "presence",⁷⁸ more spatial than psychic, this ingressive atmosphere turns out to be inextricably linked to felt-bodily (*Leib*) processes and therefore can be properly recognised only through a first-person, ambulatory and synesthetic perspective—for example, the tension hovering in a room might be due to the people in it but also to the kind of furniture, the lights, the architecture and so on. In cases like this, the question as to what is internal (the self) and what is external (the world) in an atmosphere becomes meaningless, because here subject and object are two sides of the same coin.

(b) Secondly, atmospheres sometimes allow for a syntonic tuning and other times divide, generating "numerous invisible, yet selective and efficacious, frontiers" (Tellenbach 1968, 56), thus giving life to a natural as well as social segmentation which might turn out to be only the outcome of a contrast between different but contiguous atmospheres. What follows, in the worst cases, is a dramatic social exclusion (e.g. in the name of an alleged common good taste) and, in the best ones, a pervasive affective quality that acts as a situational and not ghostly constraint,⁷⁹

⁷⁷There are some contact points with the psychological theory of "ambient vision", based on immediacy, superficiality, pre-attentive character and feeling rather than understanding (Ohno 2000, 151–152).

⁷⁸See Otto (1917), to which Schmitz also often refers.

⁷⁹Only a strictly reistic thinker can claim and hope that atmospheric affordances may "disappear as a swarm of unsubstantial ghosts" (Henckmann 2007, 76).

thus distinguishing a situation from other ones.⁸⁰ A situation (atmospherically) deeply involves the perceiver through apparent and self-manifested phenomena which are not to be (hermeneutically, semiotically) interpreted and beyond whose phenomenic surface, indeed, it is meaningless to proceed—unless, of course, interpreting is not understood in a Heideggerian sense, that is, as a fully affective and prereflexive attuned experience. Which is why, faced with a sad situation, for example, we do not “interpret” some facial expressions or gestures as sadness, but we “see” the sadness itself.

(c) The third point to stress is that perceiving atmospheres means, as Schmitz claims in many works, felt-bodily communicating with meaningful impressions suggested by animate and inanimate forms. Unlike the physical body (stable, extended, divisible, etc.) the felt one is surfaceless and occupies an “absolute” and non-geometrical space; it is capable of self-auscultation without organic mediations and is larger than the skin’s “border”. Thanks to a range of possible states (negative and positive), made possible by the specific intertwining between the poles of its dynamic (contraction→narrowness/expansion→vastness)⁸¹ and by an articulation not into discrete-anatomical parts but into “corporeal isles”⁸² of variable duration and configuration, the felt-body acts as a real sounding board for atmospheres, sharing with the world bridge-qualities like motor suggestions and synaesthetic qualities (in Schmitz’s terms) or environmental affordances, that is, affective-rich ecological invites (in Gibson’s terms) (Gibson 1986).⁸³

(d) The fourth (and last) thing to notice is that—being “climate” conditions that precede the subject/object distinction and authoritatively modulate the lived and pre-dimensional space whose presence one feels—atmospheres are, in a sense, beyond truth and falsity. Indeed,

⁸⁰ For Schmitz (1998, 178), yet, not all situations are atmospheric.

⁸¹ Schmitz freely develops this idea following, among others, Scheler and Binswanger. An interesting idea needing further reflection, however, is that atmosphericness, usually based on a certain *stadium* within this *continuum* between extreme poles, might no longer exist when it reaches them.

⁸² See Schmitz (from 1965 on) and Griffero (2013, 57–73; 2016b, 2017b).

⁸³ Krebs (2018, 252–255) proposes to think of an (aesthetic) resonance in terms of sympathy, flow and feeling of being at home maybe repeats the (deeply humanistic?) mistake of axiologising (harmonicity, beauty, etc.) the notion of atmosphere (as well as mood). I have tried to prevent this here, also by only using concepts in a literal sense (landscape, for instance, only means a natural landscape) (cf. Krebs 2018, 262, fn. 16).

aesthetic workers may surely fail in staging an atmosphere, but a perceiver cannot ever make mistakes in perceiving it. Indeed, I do not know under what conditions an atmospheric feeling could legitimately be identified as a mistake: is being infected by an atmosphere something wrong, or is it rather the right way to “feel” the atmosphere? Is one maybe mistaken when one resists it, or does such resistance prove that one did (ingressively) perceive it correctly? Is one mistaken when expressing it in a subjective way, or isn’t rather the subjective resonance the best proof of its involving effectiveness? Is one mistaken, maybe, when noticing it without feeling it, or when one doesn’t even perceive it? This path has gotten us into a real maze. It would therefore be better to finally acknowledge that, within the first-impression perceptual and descriptive-phenomenological limits, there are neither fake atmospheres nor a distinction between apparent atmospheres and real ones (not to mention that sometimes the latter seem so, just because they are based on culturally more permanent paradigms).

7 GETTING UNDER THE SKIN OF ONTOLOGY

Borrowing Schmitz’s heterodox ontology and other sources, the challenge is now to list the main features of my idea of atmospheres as quasi-things (*Halbdinge*).⁸⁴

- (a) Unlike things, they are not edged, discrete, cohesive, solid, perduring in time, normally inactive, without concealed sides, and therefore totally coinciding with their phenomenal appearance.
- (b) Unlike things, again, they have no inherent real tendencies, and consequently no history (i.e. they don’t get old), thus being something radically evenemential and irreducible to a trace of something other than itself.
- (c) They are not properties of something else, but coincide with their own phenomenal “character” as absolutely “actual” facts and not universally predictable *genera*.
- (d) They are (felt as) more immediate, intrusive and demanding than things, resulting in the alternation of incorporation and de-

⁸⁴For more details, see Griffero (2010, 119–129; 2013, 9–14).

corporation as well as acting through a power or authority⁸⁵ that, hardly linkable to culturally emotional norms,⁸⁶ sometimes is so absolute as to prevail over any critical distance.⁸⁷

- (e) Unlike things, they have an intermittent life, in the sense that they come and go, without there being any point in asking what they did in the meantime.
- (f) Along with transient atmospheric qualities, there are also relatively persistent atmospheric qualities. The atmosphere of a seascape, for example, may obviously vary depending on weather, tides and waves and so on, but also expresses something emotionally stable (e.g. a certain sublimity) as a space of possibility and regardless of *hic et nunc* weather conditions. However, as impressive environmental situations, atmospheres are far from only stimulating cognitive and pragmatic processes: they also provide a solid structure to otherwise impossible affective states or states destined as such to remain much more indeterminate, thus acting as “tools for feeling” or, if you prefer, as truly embodied and extended affects in all respects.
- (g) Unlike things, they do not act as the separate causes of the influence they exert, but are the influence itself. Which is why—exactly like the wind, which does not exist prior to and beyond its blowing—they are qualitative-affective holistic phenomena behind which one should not look for any separate cause.
- (h) Although one cannot properly ask about their whence or where, they “occupy” surfaceless and in any case non-relative (or lived) spaces, thus having a very special (pre-dimensional) spatiality characterised by (partly *fiat* and partly *bona fide*) blurred boundaries.⁸⁸

⁸⁵In my view, this “dominance” dimension seems to be doubtless even when an atmosphere acts only as a background and not as a figure (*contra* Schönhammer 2018, 158).

⁸⁶Otherwise how could one explain the binding authority, for instance, of a sultry summer evening?

⁸⁷This means that the atmospheric feelings inherently endowed with greater authority (which I call prototypic) necessarily prevail.

⁸⁸“The atmosphere of a thing extends itself precisely wherever the presence of this thing entails a difference” (Hauskeller 1995, 33). On possible borders of atmospheres, cf. Griffero (2010, 126–127).

- (i) Unlike the phenomena that naïve physics considers invariable, they are relatively (perceptually) amendable, albeit only on the level of common sense, that is, due to subsequent and equally qualitative perceptions.
- (j) If atmospheres are ontologically quasi-things, they should have some kind of identity. This is shown by the fact that one can be mistaken in producing them—for example, trying to arouse an atmosphere of cheerfulness in a foggy, damp and ghostly lake sunset—and that one can certainly imagine, for example, the (counterfactual) conditions under which that atmosphere, for example, could be less tense.
- (k) They never exist, if not in a very inappropriate way (i.e. as the object of a simple and even counterfactual design work). They only exist as purely potential (thinkable) states, because it would sound absurd, for example, to speak of a real oppressive atmosphere that does not oppress anyone (neither now, nor ever). Which does not mean, however, that an atmosphere, especially a prototypic one, depends in all respects on its being subjectively perceived.
- (l) There are things and situations that stably arouse certain atmospheres, and others that only occasionally take charge of them. The beautiful and natural atmosphere of a certain landscape, for example, ceases to be such, sensorially perceived components being equal, when its origin is ascertained to be intentional and artificial.
- (m) They are mostly (not always) an “in-between”, which is made possible by the (felt-bodily but also social and symbolic) co-presence of subject and object. When intentionally generated, they act as a “transhipment place” for meanings and feelings.⁸⁹

Many of these points, of course, could and should be subject to further clarification. Here I would like to emphasise the last one: the inter-corporeal “in-between” that an anti-dualistic atmospherology relies on should not ever be reified to the point of counting as “a third element

⁸⁹ Hasse (2014, 233).

which, as a membrane, is interposed between the two margins” (Schmitz 2002, 71). This would lead, indeed, to the strengthening of the dualism that atmospherology is seeking to avoid, and atmospherology itself would lose much of its philosophical (though controversial, if you wish) originality. In a sad atmosphere, for example, the sadness is neither only my sadness nor the mere outcome of me and the situation, as though they were independent and isolable parts: rather, it is a holistic situation of sadness. In-between should here be heretically understood as a relationship⁹⁰ prior to its *relata*.⁹¹ That one is not able to give a name to this kind of experience only depends on the fact that our adjectivation is compelled to alternatively rely on the subjective or the objective and is not perfectly suited to states that are pre-subjective as well as pre-objective, often acting more as a condition of possibility of the subject-environment relationship than as its outcome.

8 LOOKING AT THE RANGE OF ATMOSPHERIC “GAMES”

Escaping the seemingly persuasive heuristic distinction between process-based and holistic approaches (Wiesse and Pfaller 2018, 7–8), it could be said that the phenomenological encounter with the already mentioned three ideal-typical forms of atmosphere may give rise to various emotional games.⁹² This, cum *grano salis*, also holds for artistic perception.

- (a) An atmosphere can overwhelm us (ingressive-antagonistic encounter), completely reorient our emotional situation and be refractory to a more or less conscious attempt at a projective, reflective and amending reinterpretation. Which means that the perceiver experiences themselves, at least in a provisional way, as something other than the atmosphere they objectively encounter and feel as an antagonistic outside reality,⁹³ even if this deeply involving atmosphere should later encourage to open themselves more to the world.

⁹⁰Which recalls the Japanese *ki*: cf., among others, Hisayama (2014).

⁹¹For a critical look on the ontology of relations, see Böhme (2001, 54–55) and Schmitz (2005, 33–50).

⁹²For more details, see Griffero (2010, 129–141).

⁹³Given that its certainty and the resulting dualism always derive from the original experience more of a resistance than an incentive. It is the opposite for Bollnow (1941, 112–130), who considers our trust in reality as a primary given (although mostly unaware).

- (b) One can be in tune with an atmosphere (syntonic encounter), to the point that, whereas others may even be upset by it, one may not realise one has entered it and “lose” oneself in the actions suggested by the atmosphere—which are often purposeless and enjoyed by themselves—thus making it impossible to thematise the atmosphere in itself. This apparent absence of atmosphere can be explained in at least three ways. (1) It may be the result of the self-fulfilling tendency of both positive and negative moods to make it only possible to focus what they previously radiated outside.⁹⁴ (2) It could result from a (Gestaltic) insufficient contrast between figure and background and (3) even from a felt-bodily disposition that is so compact as to prevent the perceiver from letting themselves go to what they perceive. All this may cause in the perceiver a full misunderstanding of the situation and consequently an embarrassing affective and social inadequacy for themselves and for others, as when one euphorically joins a community pervaded instead by a tragic atmosphere. It’s totally plausible, however, that the most influential atmospheres, exactly like *Stimmungen*, are those which always reside on the margins of our attentional sphere,⁹⁵ lying in the background to the point of not being thematically perceived but rather being the tacit and non-thetical contextual conditions of other subsequent transitive perceptions.⁹⁶
- (c) Sometimes the perceiver is able to clearly recognise (mere contemplation) an atmosphere,⁹⁷ regardless of whether it is or isn’t felt as antagonistic to their feeling/emotion, without being really felt-bodily involved by it.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the perceiver can “understand” its “objective” roots and even perfectly describe it to others, backed up by shared situations and the fact that others would feel the same in similar cases (think of literature and poetry, for example). When it

⁹⁴The happily atmospherised person is more inclined, obviously, to seek happy atmospheric situations and to forget about the others.

⁹⁵Cf. Musil (1943, 1277): “emotions cannot be stopped: nor can they be looked at ‘under the microscope’. This means that the more closely we observe them, the less we know what it is we feel. Attention is already a change in the emotion”.

⁹⁶For the discussion of differences and similarities between atmospheres and moods, cf. also Bulka (2015) and Griffèro (2019c).

⁹⁷It is what Geiger (1911) calls “a purely contemplative attitude”.

⁹⁸Which already implies perhaps a shift from the first-person to the third-person perspective.

is not due to a psychopathological disease (Fuchs 2013, 21), this lack of emotional resonance could be caused by dull and superficial affective characters, by the perceiver’s depressed mood or by a neutral feeling, as in the case of a grey everyday mood or even a scientific work, intentionally aimed at avoiding extreme emotions and preventing very sudden mood swings (Strasser 1956, 111). Above all, this clearly shows the failure of any projectivist thesis and the resulting theoretical “as-if” alibi, but leaves open the question whether one should admit at least the presence of a minimal affective ingredient in every cognitive account (and vice versa).⁹⁹ In other terms, there is still the slippery slope of the unavoidable overlappings between emotion and cognition (even in the case of apathy).

- (d) An atmosphere can also elicit resistance, a sort of mood protest that pushes one to try to change it, perhaps after embodying it in reluctant actions so spontaneous as to conceal its affective origins. The very intensity of this emotional protest is indeed, in my view, the best proof of the objective and external effectiveness of the (prototypic) atmosphere one reacts to. Such discrepancy is therefore the outcome of a sudden ingression in an atmosphere and of an at least partial and provisional attunement with it.
- (e) An atmosphere is not “composed” but “generated”: it supervenes on its (material and immaterial) generators,¹⁰⁰ being something that Kant (KrV B, 210) would call an “intensive magnitude” that is given immediately and not through subsequent synthesis or combinations. An atmosphere may sometimes even concretise itself in “ingredients” that normally express completely different moods, such as when the melancholy of a funeral is even increased by a lovely sunny day (Hellpach 1911, 186). Another case is when our self-disdain is strengthened by the beauty of a landscape (Cioran), whose resulting negative atmosphere—*nota bene*—is such only because the situation suggests exactly the opposite of what one usually expects (beauty), which is still somewhat perceived. The beautiful landscape thus seems paradoxically ugly, due to sullenness

⁹⁹ Baensch (1923, 9–10), for example, claims that, since the burst of an objective feeling always implies a partial involvement, what happens is a conflict between two different forces, both inside (involvement and opposition) and outside (objective feeling and objectified rejection).

¹⁰⁰ One may speak of effervescence (or “self-transcendence”) of the qualities that could be improperly labelled as an atmosphere’s “components”.

ending up in resentment, precisely because it is also felt as beautiful and amazing!¹⁰¹

- (f) Although, for me, a prototypic atmosphere is the one suggested by the first impression,¹⁰² the following sensible experience may give rise to a relatively different atmospheric perception. This means that, like every emotion, often even because of the language describing it, an atmosphere should be considered not only a state but also a process. Even if the fully felt-bodily involving atmosphere only results from the first impression, a shaped and consolidated atmospheric feeling proves to be valid only in intermediate stages.

Thus, first atmospheric impressions might change over time. And for various reasons: perceptual and/or climatic changes, the unveiling of a sensory illusion, a change in the perceiver's physiological conditions, the contrast between the global atmosphere and its unwanted (and maybe previously unnoticed) sub-atmospheres,¹⁰³ additional and divergent cognitions, purely idiosyncratic experiences, the centring of the feeling on misleading anchoring points and fields of condensation (as in some pathological states, for instance, in incipient psychosis),¹⁰⁴ new actions and thoughts influenced by the first impression (and their feedback) (Slaby 2008, 171–172), tendencies and strivings which affectively “infect” each other and so on. In short, like any other feeling, a not-prototypic atmosphere can change over time and be filtered through the perceiver's new perceptions and experiences, ideas and evaluations. And yet, it can dynamically change, but—*nota bene*—always within the limits set by the first atmospheric impression, which is strengthened, confirmed, mitigated or even denied over time.

Moreover, it is not inconceivable that, as happens with general moods,¹⁰⁵ one could become aware of certain atmospheres only afterwards—for example, sometimes the uniform colour that things and thoughts inexplicably have can only be explained by a previous

¹⁰¹ For this inverted correspondence, cf. Seel (1996, 101–102).

¹⁰² Its immediacy does not exclude that it can emerge in a quick but more gradual way, like an “unexpected” but not necessarily weaker “infiltration” (Schmitz 2002, 73).

¹⁰³ A crucial but unfortunately still rarely investigated subject.

¹⁰⁴ Where nearly every object can become the apparent intentional object of a certain feeling. See Conrad (1958).

¹⁰⁵ Recall later Heidegger's kind of boredom, felt only after a pleasant dinner and which this dinner is evidently the cause of.

influential (albeit unaware) affective state. This especially applies to negative atmospheres, which usually stimulate the perceiver’s analytic bottom-up approach to the details rather than to the whole. However, this doesn’t mean that we must embrace in toto a projectivistic relativism. And the reason is always the same: if by observing and experiencing an atmosphere we *ipso facto* always altered it, no undesired atmosphere could ever overwhelm and affect us, which instead often happens.

- (g) An atmosphere, lastly, might also elicit an active feedback loop to the extent that perceivers, for example, the spectators of an artistic performance, coordinate with it to the point of reinforcing the staged atmosphere, thus in turn influencing those who were committed to create and maintain that.

9 ROCKING THE BOAT (IN A PHILOSOPHICAL WAY)

In the last few paragraphs (cf. *supra* §§6–8) I provided a brief, obviously unexhaustive and perhaps a little abstract overview of the possible ontological and phenomenological distinctions that my atmospherology is based on. They constitute, I believe, the necessary framework of the following controversial philosophical issues.

- (a) First, it should be noted that an atmospherisation can also be generated by language, by poetical phono-symbolical values (at best) but also by socially exclusive “sticky” words (at worst) (see Ahmed 2004, 92). This does not reductively mean, however, that atmospheres are nothing but the outcome of a special and illegitimate use of language¹⁰⁶ and/or a lexicalisation of metaphors. The very condition of metaphorisation—that is, the possible distinction between proper (literal) and improper (figurative) meaning—does not easily apply here: a situation atmospherically described as something that “got under one’s skin” could not be better defined through a more literal expression. Moreover, a euphoric atmosphere, for example, induces a felt-bodily levity that is not metaphorical for the mere fact that it could not be quantitatively and metrically verified. If atmospheres were metaphors, they would be as external, conceptually ineffable and untranslatable as Blumenberg’s “absolute” metaphors.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ They express moods and do not merely represent them. See Krebs (2018, 246).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Griffero (2010, 108–112) and more recently Bulka (2015, 214–215).

- (b) Secondly, my intentionally inflationary definition of atmospheres makes it possible to admit some subjective component without denying the quasi-objectivity of the prototypic ones. This neo-phenomenological externalisation certainly comes with some essentialist overtones. However, it cannot be condemned as a dangerous (or even obscurantist!)¹⁰⁸ reification, if only because atmospheres have a pre-dimensional-spatial and quasi-thingly nature. Claiming that “usually [...] the perceiving subject is not struck *by* a feeling, rather his getting struck *is* the feeling itself” (Hauskeller 1995, 26) means avoiding a too-metaphysical conception of ontology, which I understand as a simple catalogue of all the (relatively material) “entities” that exist. One should not overestimate the fact that the objectivity of feelings dangerously entails that “all feelings should be constantly present in the given space” (Fuchs 2000, 227), mainly because atmospheres are always only intermittently present in a certain (after all, pre-dimensional) space. And yet, the fact that a certain atmosphere ceases to exist as soon as a certain environment is no longer perceived means that precisely “that” particular environment is really responsible for that atmospheric feeling, whereas the subject is only its *occasio*.

Also, one should never confuse differences in subjective evaluation with the full subjectivity of atmospheres. Atmospheric narrowness, for example, is quasi-objectively felt by everyone, regardless of whether it is annoying or attractive (very young creatures, for instance, prefer closed spaces like nests or caves). The fact that two people might react differently to the same atmosphere does not prove the subjectivity and privacy of every atmosphere, at least no more than the fact that one uses an umbrella and the other lets herself be wet by the rain proves the subjectivity of rain. Usually, what generates different moods is simply a different kind of “filtering” process—neo-phenomenologically based on different felt-bodily dispositions and degrees of personal emancipation—of the “same” external atmospheric quality.

- (c) A third point concerns, again, language. In fact, we must avoid attributing an exclusively and automatically positive value to the

¹⁰⁸ It is surely more justified to claim that new phenomenology omits any social and gender difference (female atmospheric perception would be a special case!), universalising something that only applies to the European cultural context.

term “atmospheric” (without specifications), such as when saying that something “creates an atmosphere”, we usually imply it is a good one. Seemingly non-atmospheric situations can turn out to be only impersonal and anonymous atmospheres, sometimes so nuanced that one would be forced to classify them in a precisely (positive or negative) hedonistic way.¹⁰⁹ In the same way, bad affective situations are no less atmospheric than others simply because they don’t arouse a positive attunement.¹¹⁰ The latter provoke constant distraction and nervousness, sometimes resulting from an annoying sensory overload, or promote illegal or improper conduct: think of racism or xenophobia, for instance, as latent atmospheric ways of life that, when collectively triggered, often translate into ontological-social offensive discrimination. Only this necessary deaxiologisation of the very notion of “atmosphere” may really increase its heuristic potential.

- (d) Finally, the repeatedly required but not well-studied atmospheric “competence” implies at least three relatively different skills: the ability to stage atmospheres understood as an “aesthetic work” in the broad sense (productive competence); the ability to deeply feel and experience them at full (receptive competence); but also the ability to not be heavily manipulated by them (critical competence).

We should therefore not only clarify the way in which atmospheres relate and interact with one another, how they develop and disappear and so on, but also improve our responsiveness to external atmospheric impressions. Reaching this goal is certainly made easier by a certain passivity (tiredness, non-objective focalisation, half-pathological uncertainty, illness, momentary and not excessively outlined personality, semi-consciousness, crepuscular state, etc.) that could be summarised as being “in the world without actively assuming it” (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 310). This stance conflicts, no doubt, with the implicitly pragmatist-“melioristic” approach of the so-called Somaesthetics (e.g. cf. Shusterman 2008), but especially with the reflective distancing necessarily required by a critical theory seeking to fight today’s (alleged) atmospheric colonisation and the increasing certainty of being no longer the source of one’s own activity.

¹⁰⁹Slaby (2008, 179), for example, explains neutral moods as ill feelings.

¹¹⁰The same misunderstanding also played a role in the (originally musical) notion of *Stimmung*, wrongly understood in (unjustified) terms of strictly harmonious resonance.

Of course, philosophy can't be anything other than a reflection on the unreflected (it could be said that, if talking without feeling is being empty, feeling without talking is being blind—in philosophy especially!). So, my only solution to avoid both an ascetic critical theory (with the return of the removal of what it moralistically represses) and the naïve rationalist illusion of completely controlling the emotional sphere (even in chemical-genetic terms now)¹¹¹ is to follow Böhme's ethical suggestions. It is necessary to weaken the overestimated "autonomy" of the modern subject in favour of their "sovereignty", understood as "a certain willingness to expose oneself, so that human beings may be trained in accepting the fact that they are hetero-determined" (Böhme 2008, 197).

In short, a "good" critical atmospheric competence should be able to do three things. First of all, it should (1) distinguish between "toxic" and "benign" atmospheres, while being aware that one is thus walking on the thin ice that blends aesthetic and ethical, leaving the Heideggerian ontological (and therefore pre-psychological) terrain, often used as an alibi to escape ethical-political responsibility. It must be pointed out that toxic atmospheres, which cannot be reduced to non-atmospheres, are not only those arousing stress and distress, but also the dissuasive-sedative ones used by modern devices or, to use Foucault's term, apparatuses. The latter aim at defusing any social contradiction with the help both of artificial and conformist attunements and of the inhibiting effects resulting from the alarmist demand, today become obsessive, of regulating every fragment of everyday experience, possibly through the alibi of privacy and political correctness.

A good critical atmospheric competence should then (2) accept the fact that, given that there is no undisputed privileged paradigm of raising awareness (especially in our post-traditional societies), the best is to learn to have very different atmospheric experiences interact with each other. This could give rise to a well-being that, like democracy, depends on a division of powers (affective in this case) able to relativise their impact.

Lastly, it should (3) favour and foster the atmospheres where, as with a *trompe l'oeil*, an early pathic-immersive stage—unlike the mystical one—may and should be followed by a reflective-emerging stage. In my pathic aesthetics this obviously does not mean a stable emergence from

¹¹¹ About the very instructive questioning "who is afraid of atmospheres and why", cf. Griffero (2014, 2016a, 93–101; 2017a, 19–53).

immaturity, as in Kantian Enlightenment individualism, but only a temporary one from a previous immersion.

An example of atmospheres that are powerful and influential without being oppressive and coercive could be found in aesthetic experience: especially contemporary artworks, through their provocative and irritating impact, generate cognitive and affective discontinuities that allow for some critical distance. Thanks to such experiences, already anticipated by the avant-garde method of arousing the desired mood in conflicting and estranging ways (e.g. see Brecht’s mood-creating gestures) (in Simon 2013), we are no longer stuck between Scylla (an unaffectionate meaningless life) and Charybdis (an irrational participation to something one would not voluntarily contribute to).¹¹² We can now fully enjoy an involving atmospheric situation by failing to resist its contagious authority, but also be able to adopt an ironic distance (or even to walk away!) from it, maybe also thanks to the different strategies through which “aesthetic workers” alternatively focus the atmosphere’s anchoring point and condensation field, thus making the work’s meaning less or more opaque. Even if we look around very carefully I do not see other ways of (only partially) immunising oneself against today’s widespread atmospherisation, without confining oneself to ascertaining what happens, but also without resorting to some non-phenomenological moralistic criticism identifying atmospheric feelings with drugs-related euphoria, ego trips and therefore hoping that their production may fail (Henckmann 2007, 81).

In short, I’m supporting the idea that adults are not persons who remove (or try to) their passivising and therefore negative sphere (just a pie in the sky!), but rather individuals who do not neurotically prescind from it and are able to pathically immerse themselves into an atmosphere, to experience it fully, as well as to later rationally re-emerge from it, possibly also finding effective counter-tactics against its negative aspects. Only by acquiring this multifactorial atmospheric competence (productive, receptive and critical) can one learn how to partially immunise oneself from the media-emotional manipulation underlying the aestheticisation of politics and social life in the late-capitalistic “scenic” economy (Böhme 2017c).

¹¹²For a description of the “late-modern atmospheric subject”, caught between abstract scientific expertise and lifeworldly bodily experiences, see Whitehead (1979, 225).

10 WHAT IF WE HAVE JUST BEGUN?

The discussion of atmospheres as a common reality linking perceiving subject and perceived situation prior to their very relationship should now be expanded in terms both of theory and of practical applications, trying to tie up some loose ends. Philosophically speaking, the ace in the hole of atmospherology, for me, is its refutation of the “clear-and-distinct” hegemony and the subject-object dualism. Against these notions, it asserts a holistic-spatial view of external, quasi-thingly, involving and intrinsically authoritative feelings, thus allowing for a new pathic aesthetics. The latter, indeed, can be finally free from its exclusive identification with the philosophy of art and focus—avoiding the temptation to transform any given into something made—on how to be a means of what happens to us rather than subjects of what we intentionally do. From the viewpoint of pathic aesthetics, largely based on an infection model¹¹³ and somewhat resembling Nietzsche’s pathic ontology,¹¹⁴ atmospheres are the mark of any affective engagement with the world, usually irreducible to a limited perceptual object (just like objectless *Stimmungen*), but sometimes located in a delimited space, as a result of the intertwining between the environment and the person’s feeling.¹¹⁵

At this point, it may certainly be suspected that atmospheres, because of their metafactorial ubiquity and transversality that makes them a kind of gravy train, end up removing any explicit distinction between feelings, emotions, affects, moods, and so on. Don’t we run the risk of making of today’s atmospheric paradigm a kind of universal Potemkin effect?¹¹⁶ It is precisely to avert this danger that I’d like to propose that we call atmospheres only those feelings that, unlike emotions and floating moods, we experience as poured out into (and/or radiated by) a certain external space,¹¹⁷ thus factually contradicting the introjectionist metaphysics (or

¹¹³Inexplicably, Krebs (2018, 252) does not consider being infected, for example, by a peaceful landscape as an aesthetic experience.

¹¹⁴According to which “the will to power is not a being, not a becoming, but as a pathos is the most elementary fact from which a becoming and effecting first emerge” (Nietzsche 1988, 259).

¹¹⁵Rauh (2012) calls this experience a “particular atmosphere” and suggests to investigate it by taking notes of perception, correcting memory protocols about the perceived atmosphere and using the same person to collect and evaluate data (Rauh 2018a, 140).

¹¹⁶As known, Loos defines as “a Potemkin village” a town that is nothing but atmosphere.

¹¹⁷This explains the topophilia somehow implicit in every theory of atmospheres!

psychicisation) dominant in our culture: only those feelings, moreover, that are neither subjective nor objective and envelope perceiver and environment through an in-between preceding (at least in prototypic cases) any distinction between subject and object.¹¹⁸

The added value of a phenomenological atmospherology as a third way between affect (sociological) studies and affect (ontological) theory¹¹⁹ certainly does not simply lie in reaffirming the key role of emotions in our culture and society (Scheve and Berg 2018, 48–49). If we simply said that atmospheric feelings (fundamental or transient) may register our reactions to what happens around us, co-create our anticipations and memories and act as a dynamic motivation of intersubjectivity (see MacKinnon 1994, 9), the transdisciplinary debate (which is one of this reader’s tasks) would not go very far. The neo-phenomenological and atmospherological added value¹²⁰ really lies in contributing to an aggressive and beneficially counterintuitive “campaign” of de-psychologisation of the emotional sphere. In fact, it questions any purely projective-empathetic (or, worse, any associationist and conventionalist)¹²¹ explanation of this sphere, notoriously based on a hydraulic model of psychic filling of the extra-psychic world and “too external to account for the ‘within-ness’ or integrality of moods in landscapes” (Krebs 2018, 250).

And yet, even if atmospheres were but the outcome of a subjective projection, it would still be necessary to explain why our feeling is projected into *that* space and not into another one. This (certainly not only social)¹²² externalisation of feelings rests, indeed, on an almost “phenomenological

¹¹⁸ It’s hard to understand why Krebs (2018, 247–248) confines the everyday atmospheric (or mood-inducing) experience of an unseparated unity of self and world only to babies and some animals, given that this experience neither excludes the possibility to question “how” moods and atmospheres permeate spaces, nor means to consider atmospheric spaces as somehow sentient.

¹¹⁹ For the differences between these two approaches, see Scheve, Berg (2018, 36–37).

¹²⁰ Which really stands out from the slightly anonymous “theoretical constellations that share an interest in complex entanglements between space and subjectivity” which Gandy (2017, 368) refers to.

¹²¹ The association, if anything, comes after and it is certainly not arbitrary, given that only the atmosphere makes that reference possible (Hauskeller 1995, 139).

¹²² Hauskeller provides a more sophisticated “sociological” explanation of this externality: the objectual immanence of expressive characters would be due to their “huge social invariance”, so that the contrast between personal feeling and perceived atmosphere would coincide with the difference between “different levels of subjectivity”, particularly between how one should feel something and how one really feels it (Hauskeller 1995, 29–30, 45–46).

naturalization” (Wimmer 2011, 118), which sometimes goes so far as to say that atmospheres are “no more subjective than highways, only less easy to fixate” (Schmitz 1969, 87).¹²³ The task of atmospherology is not, however, an (impossible) regression to a pre-introjectionist way of life such as the archaic view of the emotional (*thymos*) as a “demonic” extrapersonal sphere, but simply a healthy re-balancing of the predominant psychic and dualistic ontology.

In conclusion, any strategy that seeks to exclude the atmospheric *prius* from a more inflationed ontological catalogue does not hold water. To paraphrase an Italian saying, atmospheres go out through the door (abstract theory) but come back through the window (lived experience), exactly like many other elusive qualitative entities wrongly marginalised by the hegemonic reism (holes, shadows, clouds, void, waves, perceptive phantoms, fumes, etc.). What we have to do, then, is resist both the eliminativistic tendency to downgrade outside affections to a collective deception, almost as if Schmitz’s quasi-thingly atmospheres were fictional like a *fata morgana* (Henckmann 2007, 74), and the dispositionalist suggestion to declass atmospheres to simple adverbs of object poles, stressing the quasi-objectivity and externality of atmospheric feelings. It’s no longer true that “nobody can rely on a smell, on something fleeting or atmospheric, to testify to something” (Staiger 1946, 87), even if the perception of atmospheres certainly cannot be precisely located in the brain (locating a function, however, does not mean phenomenologically explaining it!).

Fully embodying its “killjoy” mission against the falsely emancipatory rejection of experiential passivity, atmospherology aims at getting rid of a world “without qualities” and happily welcomes the non-regressive discovery that one is not entirely the master of one’s own home, without necessarily becoming prey to some Lorelei. This is nothing new, of course. Unexpectedly, in full tune with Sartre’s strong call to take “everything out” (even ourselves!), thus freeing ourselves from our “inner life” and bringing terror and magic back into things (Sartre 1939), Hugo von Hofmannsthal claimed, several years before, that felt-bodily experiencing a mood (an atmospheric situation, in my terms) means being the seismograph of one’s own time.

¹²³ A position later mitigated by stating that atmospheres only have a quasi-thingly nature (Schmitz 2014, 9).

We do not possess our self: it is blown towards us, it escapes us for long moments, and recovers us in a breath. Yes—our “self”! How metaphoric the word is. Feelings return that found a shelter here before. But are they really the same as then? Is it not rather what they hatched—driven back here by a dark longing for home. Enough, something is back. Something meets within us with some other. We are but a dove-cote. (Hofmannsthal 1903, 76)

Regardless of the outdated early twentieth-century emphatic tone, this is still the very point of my atmospherological approach.

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Atmospheric Spaces

Hermann Schmitz

During the fifth century BC, a shift of man's conception of world perception and self-consciousness occurred in Ancient Greece, a shift that would prove to become fateful for the time after. The world is split up, with every conscious subject getting a part of it as his own private inner world, which contains his whole experience, sealing it off from the outside. Its name is "psyche", "soul". In the beginning of the fifth century, when its conception was composed of life and of death spirit, it still lacked this sealing-off; Heraclitus said: "Of soul thou shalt never find boundaries, not if thou trackest it on every path" (*Diog. Laert.* IX, 1 and 7). A surviving isolated verse from Sophocle's otherwise lost work *Manteis* (second half of the fifth century) says "to open the closed gate to the soul" (*Soph.*, fr. 360 Nauck 1964). The division of the world lies in between these two references. The outer world that remains between them after the subtraction of all inner worlds has been abraded by Democritus as well as by Plato, leaving only a small variety of features and their assumed bearers. The waste accumulated through this abrasion gets disposed of by transferring it to the soul, either intentionally as in the case of the specific qualities of the senses, or on the quiet, as the outer world's stock is forgotten and, in a modified form, suddenly finds accommodation in the soul. Hereby the felt body and embodied communication, emotions as atmospheres as well as other atmospheres,

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rich impressions as well as other significant situations and more get repressed from the attention; what remains are inner worlds for self-control and an outer world for world-control, with the latter initially being exercised by god, later by men and their instruments.

At the same time as well as analogously related, Greek geometry evolves to become the first deductive science that makes spaces of surfaces a subject of discussion, examining figures such as circles, triangles, and conic sections, as well as solid figures in accordance with their surfaces. The conception of space has since and with great implicitness postulated the existence of surfaces within space. Later on, this conception matured in the form of analytic/coordinate geometry, which traverses space with grids developed within the surfaces and creates the schema for a randomly exact localization. This stipulation of a surface-containing type of space has far-reaching consequences. Surfaces are readily accessible, partly as plain surfaces such as hairless human skin, partly as surfaces not tracing out anything, for example, some sorts of light spots. Surfaces are needed to get to (in descending order) line segments (as edges) and points (as vertices). Without spaces and line segments it is not possible to classify massive bodies as three-dimensional volumes. Without slice plains one cannot obtain divisibility from the expanse of bodies. Above all, line segments and thus also surfaces are required to introduce locations that allow determining where something is situated. This introduction of locations assumes targets of glances that get linked to each other by connecting them with line segments. In contrast to the direction of glances, these junction lines are reversible, that is, they can always be turned in the opposite direction as well. Thus they make it possible to read out distances and positions, which in turn makes it possible to introduce a system of locations that determine each other by means of the respective positions and distances of objects within them—a locational space, as I call it. All these conclusions and orientation aids referring to the space familiar to us are the result of our comprehension of surfaces.

There are also spaces that are surfaceless. An example for this is the space of sound. Hereof, I do not think as much of signals regarding direction and distance related to the acoustic source, but rather of the space generated by rhythmic and tonal suggestions of motion of sound such as stinging noise, fading echo, rise and decline of volume, pressure, and gyration, everything that can leap from the sound to people dancing and marching. I also think of the synesthetic mass property of sound as in the wide-projecting, sonorous stroke of the gong or in a high-pitched, sharp

whistle. Sound has volume, albeit this volume is not three-dimensional, since it lacks surfaces. Closely related to it is the surfaceless space of profound silence, which is expansive and dense in the case of festive silence, even more expansive and dense as oppressive silence, expansive and gentle as the silence of a pristine morning. Other examples are the space of weather, which one experiences as a loosely filled vastness when stepping outside a stuffy room, or the space of the inconspicuous backfield that one on the one hand endlessly utilizes by means of small movements of unbending, leaning backwards, and stretching, and, on the other hand, rushes through when dancing backwards in a swinging manner, without concern for extensively confined obstacles; the space of headwind, which is felt as motion that is free of a locational change, that is, as long as one does not reinterpret the experienced wind, a half-entity, as air, a full entity; the space of freely unfolding gesture; the space of the water for a swimmer, who is either struggling against or smoothly being carried by a resisting, surfaceless volume that contains no line segments, though it contains directions of forging ahead or of counter-flowing. Such surfaceless spaces are not merely shady side issues or functional deficits of our accustomed locational space; in fact, they are its essential precondition, not only in a psychological or anthropological sense but even logically. It can be shown that a locational space actually cannot be introduced without reference to locationless, surfaceless spaces. In a locational space, idleness and motion are defined as a continuance in location or as a change of location. Furthermore, locations are determined (identified) by their position to and distance from idle objects. If these objects began to move without the identified locations simultaneously moving with them, the latter's positions and distances to their reference objects would change. The objects within them would thus have changed their location, even if they had actually remained at the same spot. Idleness and motion could thus no longer be distinguishable, which cannot be accepted though. Thus, localization, that is, location determinability, requires idleness of the reference objects. On the other hand, an idleness that is comprehended as continuance in locational space requires locations. In this case, idleness requires the location, while the location requires idleness, thus leading to a circular definition that frustrates the introduction of a locational space, unless one can resort to a comprehension of idleness that precedes the comprehension of locational space.

The two most important types of surfaceless spaces are the space of the felt body and the space of emotions as atmospheres. When I say *felt body*,

I refer to the epitome of anything that a human being can feel as belonging to himself in the region—not always within the boundaries—of his body, without resorting to the five senses—taste, sight, touch, smell, and sound—and to the perceptual body schema (i.e. the habitual perception of one's own body) gained through sensual experiences, especially through those of sight and touch. In the first place, this contains mere embodied emotions like fright, fear, pain, hunger, thirst, itch, twitch, disgust, freshness, and fatigue; in the second place, it includes embodied stirrings, which are affective involvements of feelings, for example, of joy, sorrow, anger, shame, fear, courage, compassion, contentment, and despair; in the third place, there are felt movements, spontaneous or planned, like walking, grasping movement, jumping, dancing, shiver, twitching, and deglutition; in the fourth, we find irreversible embodied directions, some of them involving no actual movement, for example, a glance, while others rely on movements, for instance, breathing out or deglutition. All these embodied events are surfaceless. One does not feel any surfaces among his own felt body. They can be looked at and palpated only at one's physical body. The felt body though usually is an undulation of indistinct islands, some of which distinguish themselves through consistency, structure, and function. One of those is the island of respiration located in the upper and midsection. With every inhalation, it rebuilds itself through an entanglement of confining tension with widening swelling, with an initial preponderance of the swelling, which gradually shifts towards the tension until the latter is at risk of becoming unbearable, leading to its own preponderance being conducted away by the direction of exhalation, which irreversibly leads from tension to expansion, causing the island of the felt body to sink down, only to rise again right away. Here it becomes clear what surfaceless and thus not three-dimensional, though composing the vital drive through its undulation of tension and expansion, dynamic embodied volume is.

The vital drive exceeds the boundaries of one's own felt body and connects felt bodies with each other as well as with figures that do not have a felt body on their own through a common vital drive in the incorporation, which is either antagonistic (through an at least unilateral steering towards a partner) or solidary (without such a steering). Herein I want to settle for one example for antagonistic incorporation, namely the spontaneous ballet, which takes place on crowded city pavements when crowds of people hasten towards each other. Everyone only has his own destination in mind, for example, a shopping place, and merely glances at others in a casual,

nearly careless manner, which nevertheless is sufficient for passing them without colliding. In doing so, he has to pay attention not only to the course of the immediate others but also to the others, coming into view behind and beside them, which he does without actual regard to position and distance of his own body in relation to them and to those of his own body parts that are crucial for evading collisions, namely feet, shoulders, and arms. This is possible because the glances are attached to each other and transfer the suggestions of motion (the graphic preliminary sketches of impending movements of oncoming people) into the body's motor schema that operates the appropriately integrated movements and whose directions, in contrast to those of the perceptual body schema, are not reversible, but irreversible. I will get back to that later. Incorporation also exists in relation to gestalts that lack a felt body, for example, a stone flying towards me or a snowball which I evade without actual regard to position and distance of my own body parts, just like in the aforementioned case of passers-by. Such an incorporation into something lacking a felt body is made possible by embodied bridging qualities, which can be perceived at oneself as well as at encountered gestalts. Such embodied bridging qualities are suggestions of motion and synesthetic qualities. Synesthetic qualities are attributes pervading all particular senses. Often, but not always, they carry the names of specific qualities of senses, while, as width, weight, and density, they can also do without them. A good example for suggestions of motion and synesthetic qualities is the gait of a human, which can be felt among one's own felt body as well as the gait of a fellow human may be perceived as swift, smooth, tense, energetic, or bouncy, though also as soft, ponderous, heavy, dragging, shuffling, clumsy, and so on.

In the case of [embodied] stirrings of the felt body, we come across atmospheres for the first time. There are isolated embodied stirrings, which are located on particular islands of the felt body, for example, headache, stomachache, or tired legs. There are also holistic embodied stirrings, appearing like a climate surrounding the whole felt body without a distribution to particular islands. Max Scheler speaks of "vital feelings" (1973, 338–342). One example for this is fatigue. It is not the same as tiredness, since tiredness can be holistic as well as isolated, while fatigue can only be holistic. Tiredness raises the need for rest and contents itself in resting. Fatigue, on the other hand, is contented neither by rest nor by motion; it rather is a grave impairment of the vital force, no matter the state of motion of the felt body. Another example is the holistic pleasure one experiences in lazing around in the sun or in the bathtub. Also, what

is usually called the “daily form” of a human belongs here as well as the gradual, easy to disturb livening up common among quite a few people who we like to refer to as morning grouches. Such attitudes to life are holistic stirrings of the felt body. They are atmospheres of the felt body. The meaning of the word “atmosphere” in its most common significance for spatial phenomenology can be defined as follows: an atmosphere is a complete or partial, in any case, a comprehensive occupation of a surfaceless space in the range of that which is experienced as present. I speak of “occupation” instead of “satisfaction” in order to also allow an atmosphere of emptiness. By saying “comprehensive”, I want to point out that not plain single spots are occupied, but rather outspread fields that give room to quite a number of spots. Nevertheless, not every such atmosphere necessarily occupies or, respectively, claims to occupy the complete space of felt presence. For atmospheres of the felt body, Scheler’s attitudes to life, this is not the case. The fatigue of a felt body very well blends with a bristling up environment. The pleasure of the bathtub or of a warm snuggery does not exceed its borders; outside of these, it may actually be horribly cold. In this regard, atmospheres of the felt body are different from atmospheres of emotions. Aside of the embodied pleasure, there also is pleasure as an emotion, for example, the emotion one finds in the comfort of the love from another human or from a harmonious family. This emotion does not require a bathtub or a snuggery; it is present wherever one goes, borderless within the space of felt presence.

Taking the social contrast of emotions as an example, I show that atmospheres of emotions completely fill the surfaceless space or at least they claim to fill it. For that purpose, I compare two emotions, namely joy and sadness, with two purely embodied stirrings, freshness and fatigue. Joy is related to freshness, while sadness is related to fatigue; joy can be experienced along with freshness and sadness can be experienced along with fatigue. I now imagine a joyful person unknowingly coming across a group of humans lost in deep sadness. If he employs some degree of sensitivity, he will somewhat dampen the vivid expression of his joy to, at least, a touch of shy reserve temper, maybe even reservedly pause and step back. His behaviour will be different though if in a joyful mood, he encounters a group of merely fatigued people. If he wants something from them, he will not simply let their fatigue hinder him, but instead, he will rather tend to shake them up by calls or by physical action, and, if this does not prove successful, continue in this attempt to help them by offering something strengthening or sending them to the doctor or getting one for them.

This difference in the degree of contrast needs some explanation. Respect for the human dignity alone does not suffice in this respect. The fatigue has the same rightful claim to it as the grieving, thus leading to turning to physical action to pick up the latter as well in order to give them back the upright posture of pride and dignity. In order for the joyful to retreat from the sad, it takes a hindrance that is stronger than respect for the human dignity. Such a hindrance can only be found in the authority of sadness itself, an atmosphere, exuded by those that are lost in it, that exclusively claims the space of felt presence and by the gravity of its authority suppresses the less grave, but otherwise equal claim of the atmosphere of joy. In contrast, fatigue does not make any such claim, because the mere embodied stirrings, may they even be holistic, form atmospheres that are confined with regard to their environment and also do not have the authority that emotions possess.

Since splitting up the world in the fifth century BC, it has become common to enclose emotions as *passiones animae*, affects, or passions into the secluded private inner world, other than in the time of Empedocles, who prided himself on having been the first to discover that it is the love swirling around outside, having been implanted into the limbs of the mortals, that works towards these mortals featuring a friendly attitude and to peacefully work together (Freeman 1948, ch. 31 and 17). The introjection of emotions, which has been adopted from ancient Greek philosophy by all of mankind, is a fallacy though; it has to fail, since there actually is neither a soul nor any other secluded private inner sphere introjected into the soul that contains the entirety of experience. This shows especially in the impossibility to construe the actual relationship a person having conscience has to his soul (Schmitz 2009, 29–45, 2010, 145–163). Emotions are atmospheres in a surfaceless space that can be coextensive with the surface-containing locational space as in the case of the surfaceless spaces of sound and silence, but that can also extend beyond it. Atmospheres of emotions are either merely perceived or they stir in a bodily perceptible way; in the latter case, they are felt in affective involvement as the emotions that one has himself.

Surfaceless space is three-layered. The basic layer is composed of the pure moods; with their sheer width, they provide a foundation for all other emotions. There are two pure moods: contentment and despair. Despair is the mood of emptiness, a boredom mixed with disgust like the *acedia* of the Desert Fathers or the *ennui* of the French. Sometimes, it emerges through a reflexion on the futility of life and action, though in other cases

it appears spontaneously, for instance, in an eerily pale and cold twilight, or in a dank November morning at the ugly sea of houses of a large city or at a railroad station. It is oppressive, but, unlike sorrow, not depressing; it is unstable, a plunge into emptiness. In contrast, contentment is to be carried by a dense fullness of emotion, for example, the emotion one finds in the comfort of the love from another human or from a harmonious family or in a relaxed self-confidence that is not overbearing, but rather serene. The second layer is composed of the pure excitements; these are emotions whose atmosphere is imbued with directionality, but not centred on topics. Among these are joy and sadness, anxiousness and desire, discontent and distrust, which look for an occasion to emerge, and apprehensive expectation. The third layer is composed of thematically centred emotions, in which the directed stirrings are concentrated around one topic. They are often displayed as intentional emotions related to one object and then readily regarded as actual emotions. This characteristic does not suffice though, because speaking of the object of an emotion is usually ambiguous, namely in the case of the thematic centre being split up into a dense region and an anchoring point. Thus, the joy *about* something, namely about an anchoring point of joy, for example, the joy over success, is different from joy *in* something, for example, a beautiful landscape. One does not find joy about this landscape, but merely in it. During a murderous assault, the dense region of fear is the assailant while the anchoring point is death. If in an early form of fear, where an anchoring point is absent, the dense region is experienced with embodied fear, the result is horror, which, in case of the addition of an anchoring point, develops to fear.

Aside from emotions as atmospheres with a tendency towards a total expanse within the space of felt presence, there are also atmospheres that are not or at least not always emotions. The closest example is the weather in the way it is actually experienced by or, more precisely, given to human perception and feeling and, in this respect, serves as the most common topic of a conversation among strangers, that is to say before any constructive experiment concerning the analysis of a physical and a psychological part has been attempted. Another example is silence, be it among a vast plain or in the night. Weather and silence can be emotions, for instance, as bright, oppressive, pressing, or festive atmospheres; often though they lack this emotional quality. The difference lies in the way in which emotions are conceived by the felt body. The affective involvement of emotions is embodied stirring in the sense of this involvement only becoming

a true feeling of an emotion if the person initially involved goes along with the impulse taking hold of him, and only then possibly sets in in succumbing and/or in resistance. Those who, in contrast, welcome this feeling with a ready response upon the verge of its entry into the embodied affective involvement, either get only lightly touched by it, but not stirred, or they only pretend to be touched and stirred. For those embodied stirrings as well as for those atmospheres totally expanding throughout a space that both are not emotions, such an order does not exist. A weather that is not an emotion can very well cause embodied affective involvement, for instance, leading to us cursing it and wishing for a dryer weather, but by no means can this be regarded as an embodied stirring. Such a stirring would require that one initially goes along with the weather-based impulse taking hold of him and only then possibly sets in in succumbing and/or in resistance.

It is possible to live in surfaceless spaces and to find orientation within them without requiring a surface. For this purpose, a netting of different kinds of directions will do. I now want to dissect this netting. Ranking first are the embodied directions, which are expanded from confinement to expanse indivisibly and irreversibly. The glance and the directions of the body's motor schema are relevant for the orientation. Aside from the perceptual body schema, which, regarding locational space, is organized through positions and distances over reversible connections, humans (as well as animals) are equipped with a motor schema of the body that takes action if, for instance, an itch or burn on the skin leads to the dominant hand, despite not having been localized in terms of its position and distance, immediately moving to the irritated spot in order to get rid of or crush the assumed troublemaker. The body's motor schema, which controls all practically coordinated embodied movements, is based on irreversible directions that very well allow to access the absolute locations and distances of the body parts relevant for a specific movement, but not to reversely find the source of reference via the body parts, for example, the source of reference from which the right hand is always to the right or from which the foot is further away than the knee. The glance itself is one of the directions of the body's motor schema that, independent of the glance, control, for example, gestures, changes in posture, and weight shifting when one tries to maintain his balance in order to evade a possible fall, while they also work together with the glance at other times, for example, during an evasion manoeuvre. The second type of irreversible directions consists of suggestions of motion of gestalts encountering each

other, which work together with the body's motor schema under the guidance of the glance, for example, when people on a crowded pavement pass by each other without bumping into one another; I already mentioned this example earlier. The synergy of radiating embodied directions and shining in suggestions of motion suffices for effective motoric orientation among embodied communication irrespective of surfaces or anything that depends on positions and distances. I doubt that animals actually take notice of surfaces; rather, like a swimmer, they only perceive a dynamic volume, which is not regarded as three-dimensional.

Aside from embodied directions and suggestions of motion of gestalts encountering each other, the directional space, which underlies the surface-containing locational space, also contains a third type of irreversible directions: the inscrutable directions. Embodied directions as well as oncoming suggestions of motion have a specifiable source, even if it may not be localized precisely. Even mere acoustic suggestions of motion can be traced back to a sound source. I call directions inscrutable if they lack a locatable source. An example is the dragging gravity one gets hit by, when he slips and either falls or barely manages to catch himself. Like an alien force, an ambush out of nowhere, this gravity infests the felt body, and while it does not belong to it, it is perceptible only at it, though not as the doing of an external cause, and it drags the body down with it, despite the affected person's heavy resistance. Equally inscrutable are the directions of the stirring emotions. I only choose anger as an example. It resembles the dragging gravity in terms of lacking an obvious source and affecting the felt body with a heavy movement impulse that has a forward rather than a downward tendency. The object of anger, along with its dense region and anchoring point, cannot be seen as the source, because the anger does not originate from it, but is reversely led towards it. The grip is similar in both cases, the behaviour though is contrary. While the one slipping and falling is offering resistance right from the beginning, the angry one allows himself to get carried away by the anger at least initially and, thus, brings his own impulse into serving the anger, until he possibly sets in in succumbing and/or in resistance.

Anything about human motivity that is spontaneous, fluent, and "in-arbitrary", including the usually complicated and hard to learn motions spontaneously caused by inscrutably stirring emotions, takes place within the synergy of irreversibly directions of the directional space with these three types: the embodied directions, the oncoming suggestions of motion, and the inscrutable directions of emotions. All motions would

become incredibly tedious and obstructed, completely lacking fluency, if they had to be measured out in the locational space regarding their positions and distances. Animals never get beyond the directional space. Humans though are able to construct a completely different pattern of space, because they possess the ability to hold on to singular targets of glances, then connecting them on surfaces by means of line segments with irreversible directions that make it possible to read out positions and distances by which persistent locations can be introduced that allow to tell where something is located and to trace its movements from one location to another if necessary. Not before this does it also become possible to successively memorize objects at places in such a manner that one object was there first, and then got replaced by another. The locational space with all of its accomplishments does not take the place of the directional space though, but rather is built upon it and frequently draws on it. Without having a directional space as its base, a locational space is not possible. I have already shown that this is also logically consistent. Then again, anything that occurs within the directional space is also transferable into the locational space. The result of a successful synthesis of these two types of spaces is the optical space. It can sink down to the level of mere directional space, for instance, in case of an evasion manoeuvre one makes as reaction to a dangerously approaching bulky mass. In doing this, one does not think about position or distance of certain locations but integrates the suggestion of motion indicating the impending course of the mass into the body's motor schema, which then regulates the own body's movement according to the wish for an evasion. Usually though, the visual field is organized in a "locational-spatial" way, albeit interpolated into the network of directions of attention via glancing geared to the body's motor schema.¹ In contrast, the surfaceless space of sound does not extend beyond the directional space, though it can be embedded in the locational space and also be secondarily visualized in one's imagination through orientating oneself by sound sources. With the emotional space, it is similar. It cannot be completely embedded in the locational space though. Various atmospheres of emotions become apparent visually, acoustically, or in images of memory or fantasy, often merely perceived and touching only briefly before actually gripping one; but there are also emotions that one never sees or hears, not even through visualization, while they, neverthe-

¹This was shown first in Herbert Kleint's experiment with a swivel chair, which I reviewed multiple times, and more detailed in Schmitz (1967, 233–235).

less, noticeably grip the felt body as in the case of being overwhelmed by an emotion of happiness or if drowned in depression or despair without any obvious reason.² The insertability of atmospheres into the locational space goes as far as a human being able to fabricate his very own emotional space by using the emotions made available to him in spaces in the way just mentioned. This is the achievement of habitation, and with that topic I want to bring this essay to a close.

Habitation is more than the mere satisfaction of basic physical needs by walls that keep one safe from wind and weather; it is the art of capturing and cultivating those atmospheres that are emotions in order to enable one to bring his embodied condition into harmony with them. Since it has shown that these atmospheres are designed to completely claim the space of felt presence with surfaceless occupation, such a space first needs to be localized for habitation in order to prevent the atmospheres to slip away from human disposal. This purpose is met by establishing an enclosure that puts a distinction between the home and that which is outside of it, nevertheless belonging to it as a contrast. Habitation is the culture of emotions in an enclosed space.³ This definition is accurate not only for the domestic home but also for homes in the broader sense like the interior of a Christian church or one's garden. Shaping emotions in an enclosed space occurs through suggestions of motion and synesthetic qualities, which are bridging qualities that can be perceived at one's own felt body as well as at encountered gestalts. Due to this closeness to the felt body, emotions settle on gestalts equipped with such bridging qualities as well as in felt bodies, though, of course, this does not mean that such gestalts necessarily need to feel anything themselves. Thus, even gestalts that lack a felt body become carriers of atmospheres of emotions, which become apparent through them, and they also become partners in a common drive of antagonistic incorporation, even if they do not feel anything themselves as in the case of someone falling in love with a painting and, thus, sharing a common drive with it, though the painting itself is void of emotions. The incorporation makes the emotion perceived in the gestalt an own emotion of the bodily communicating person having conscience. An example for this: much to her own misfortune, the young and married journalist Ruth Berlau came under the permanent erotic spell of Bertolt Brecht, a poet unbeknownst to her so far, when he gently and interrogatively called

² On this matter, see Eduard Mörike's poem *Verborgenheit* (*Solitude*) (2001, 121–122).

³ Schmitz (1977, 258–308).

“hello” from behind her; on this, she wrote: “As I was to find out later, for quite a lot of women such gentle, interrogative calls have become the purpose in life, so to speak. This is what they have been waiting for, this is what they have relied on, and this is what they have been dreaming of” (Reich-Ranicki 1985, 126). Brecht was skilled at setting a tone whose synesthetic character was saturated with emotions. The embodied disposition of the women he wished to seduce was so geared to these emotions that it was only due to this sound that they unresistingly fell for him in a one-sided incorporation.

In a similar but more harmless manner, the use of suggestions of motion and synesthetic characters on suitably designed objects leads to the shaping of atmospheres of emotions in the enclosed space of a home and to bringing the inhabitants and/or visitors into harmony with these atmospheres. This applies to the church interior and to the garden as well as to the domestic home. In the case of the latter, the living room is most dedicated to such a culture of emotions, which, in accordance with the taste of the furnishings chosen by the inhabitant, cultivates and suppresses atmospheres via suggestions of motion and synesthetic characters, resulting in the emergence of the desired emotional climate. This includes the design of the walls, the ceiling, and the floor (which is either left blank or decorated with carpet) as well as the furniture, the temperature, and the ambient sounds. One hosts his guests in the living room, thus showing them his own approach to solving this task.

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Atmospheres and Moods: Two Modes of Being-with

Jürgen Hasse

In scientific discourses, especially outside the realm of philosophy, talk of feelings is rare, and it is possible to discern two major epistemic reasons for this circumstance.¹ Firstly, feelings are often considered to form the counterpart of the rational mind and therefore are erroneously understood as opposed to reason, despite their pivotal role in mediating between those different modalities of relating to self and world (Welsch 1987). Secondly, in the Western intellectual tradition, an understanding of the intelligible subject has been cultivated and consolidated up to the present. According to this understanding, feelings are obscure, erratic and irrational, while conceptual thinking is valorized as the predictable and comprehensible but also the “cultivated” medium of expression. Epistemologically, this view is mirrored in social-constructivist and actor-centred models, which represent the methodologically prevailing norm of “good science” and render the subject as an intelligible actor, who is capable to account reasons for his “agency” at any time.

¹However, in recent years, an “emotional turn” can be ascertained, particularly in the empirical cultural sciences (Beitel and Schneider 2016).

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Martin Heidegger has positioned his phenomenology against this devalorization of feelings by pointing to the fact that any experience is inherently emotionally attuned because phenomena are always entangled in meanings.

What has escaped notice is that the basic ontological interpretation of the affective life in general has been able to make scarcely one forward step worthy of mention since Aristoteles. On the contrary, affects and feelings come under the theme of physical phenomena, functioning as a third class of these, usually along with ideation [*Vorstellen*] and volition. They sink to the level of accompanying phenomena. (1927, 17)

Human existence (*Dasein*) is a priori grounded in an affective structure, which Heidegger termed *Befindlichkeit*—an intricate felt sense of one’s own situatedness—and can thus only be experienced as entangled in feelings. With recourse to Heidegger, Paola-Ludovika Coriando states that the *Befindlichkeit* discloses to us “as a mood the whole of one’s being-in-the-world”; in other words: being-in-the-world “is experienced *as* a mood” (2002, 135). Otto Friedrich Bollnow, who studied philosophy under Heidegger, summarized in a similar vein: “In principle, there is no state of human life which is not attuned to a specific mood” (1941, 54). This situated attunement can also be observed on a supra-subjective plane in collective states, such as the *Zeitgeist* and world views, which in their normative orientation are bolstered by emotional meanings.² And it is again Bollnow, drawing on Wilhelm Dilthey, who stressed a direct relation between “life moods” and fixed world views, thereby pointing to a meeting point between feeling and reason (Bollnow 1941, 61).

The simple insight that the role of feelings in human life cannot be marginalized is already validated by everyday life. For the typical scientist, who considers scientific reasoning to be isolated from the allegedly sinister realm of emotions, this insight is disturbing because it questions the myth of the intelligible actor. The sociologist Heinz Bude (2016), for example, considers the notion of mood as problematic because it has its roots in *German* philosophy and history. Maybe this is why he provides neither a

² Steffen Kluck describes the *Zeitgeist* as an overarching, collective situation in the sense of Hermann Schmitz’ neo-phenomenology (Kluck 2008) and Marion Heinz emphasizes the emotive character of world views (Heinz 2001). *Zeitgeist* and world views are not purely cognitive orientations, but are supported by certain emotional attitudes to life, which bear resemblance to moods.

thorough etymological reconstruction of the term “mood”, nor an accurate delineation to the concept of atmospheres. This illustrates that even the most “sound” scientific reasoning is contingent on feelings, as Bude’s reluctance towards the notion of moods is generated by a repulsing affect towards the dark shadows of *German* national history, which, indeed, did cast a shadow on the humanities.

The evident fact that reasoning cannot be isolated from emotional value judgements (which applies as well to science) was not only emphasized by Jürgen Habermas (1968) when he addressed the relationship between *Knowledge and Human interests* but almost fifty years earlier by Johannes Volkelt when he remarked that “the emotional transitions into the theoretical mind in a flowing manner” (1922, 89). In the light of virulent (inter)dependencies, he claimed that the scientist should “release the personal value beliefs from their isolation and incoherence, in order to integrate them into a consistent conception of values” (1922, 85). He thusly took the view that the “peculiar nature of the mind is indivisibly linked to value judgements”, and scientific practice therefore has to benchmark itself against the “possible scientific justification of those values” (1922, 81–83). In similar fashion, the Heideggerian notion of care (*Sorge*) as a prevailing mood is encouraged by the emotional impetus of commitment towards the life of future generations. Care as a moral category of reason *safeguards* that only those actions can claim validity which can be answered for in the face of future generations’ vital interests. A solely *theoretical* attitude indicates a lack of care for the conditions of life in a distant future. A similar philosophical notion of care, which attends to the carefulness of human beings towards themselves, can be found in the works of Michel Foucault and Peter Sloterdijk. Having investigated the significance of feelings for human life as well as scientific work, so far nothing has been said about the form in which feelings influence these domains—as moods, atmospheres, attitudes or aesthetic orientations. In the following, I discuss the differentiation of moods and atmospheres.

1 THE VICINITY OF “ATMOSPHERES” AND “MOODS”

The distinction between atmospheres and moods is far from obvious. This becomes apparent in colloquial language as well as scientific terminology, which tend to regard the terms as synonymous, or show a lack of clearly explicated differences. This lack of differentiation indicates an intersectional relation between these similar notions and their associated meanings.

The difficulty of formulating a clear-cut distinction is even aggravated when the conceptual boundaries remain unclear after a programmatic differentiation has been made. For example, Wolfhart Henckmann's (2008) work on the differentiation of atmospheres and moods remains rather diffuse, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of uncertainties. In contrast, Fritz Strack and Atilla Höfling develop a comparatively profiled position when they ascertain that moods do not only affect our life but also the perception of atmospheres (2008, 108). Yet, this holds true vice versa as atmospheres do also affect moods.

At the turn of the twentieth century, there have been vivid discussions in academia about the nature of moods. However, in these discussions blurred boundaries prevail such as in the work of Hans Lipps. On the one hand, he addresses moods in the sense of Heidegger as "certain ways of being" (Lipps 1941, 99) and thereby as a fundamental layer of all experiences. On the other hand, when he illustrates them by reference to the "tuned morning", the "mood of Sundays" or the "bleakness of a rainday", he rather seems to focus on the atmospheric character of moods (1941, 97). A commentary by Hermann Schmitz on Lipps' understanding of moods does not help to clarify the overlap: "What makes the space vibrant, air, light, atmosphere, is the specific substrate of this mood" (Schmitz 1981, 216). Yet, this does not preclude the specific characteristic of moods compared to atmospheres and which we already find formulated by Lipps: in contrast to atmospheres, moods have an *existential* core: "one can try to banish it [the mood], but not intercept it like an affect, which does not grab hold or simply afflicts like boredom" (Lipps 1941, 98). According to this description, the specific characteristic of moods seems to be their affective seizure. This criterion is remarkable because there are affectively seizing atmospheres as well. However, this does not legitimize the synonymy of atmospheres and moods, but raises the question under which conditions an atmosphere can transition into a mood.

Considering the affective power of moods over the overall well-being in current and enduring situations,³ it is not surprising that they are of exceptional pertinence to psychiatry. As one of the reasons for the scarce

³The concept of "situation" in neo-phenomenology denotes a specific structure of relating to self and world. Situations are characterized by an internally diffuse meaningfulness, of which singular states of affair, programmes and problems can be explicated. Situations exist as personal, collectively shared, current or enduring situations. For an introduction to the concept of situation in neo-phenomenology, see Schmitz 2009, 47–55.

theoretical understanding of moods in philosophy, Manfred Wimmer quotes the fact that moods have been generally considered as a pathological expression rather than a mirror of a healthy and vital life (2011, 98). With regard to the high affective degree of moods, Bollnow points to a divisive characteristic between atmosphere and mood: “Every mood is an accordance, so that also the ‘mood of the disposition’ is a case of accordance” (1941, 33). He distinguishes three directions, in which such an accordance can manifest itself: (1) between an inner sphere of subjective experience and the environment, (2) between the felt body and the soul and (3) between all singular efforts within the soul (1941, 33). Thus, moods tinge the subjective condition and exert power over it. This imperative power to affect differentiates moods from atmospheres, which can be experienced from an emotional distance and do not necessarily have to gain emotional authority.

When Lipps remarks about moods: “[...] The mood might have a cause; but this cause does not explain it”, he alludes to the fact that moods exhibit a certain inscrutability of personal affections (1941, 98). But what holds true for moods pertains as well to atmospheres. Often, they cannot be ascribed to a cause, even though they become tangible and take hold in an immersive way. In their specific mode of being as feelings, moods and atmospheres are not comparable to rational calculation and can therefore never be *exactly* deciphered with regard to their cause and effect.

Philipp Lersch places moods at the centre of his deliberations as felt-bodily states of emotion, when he describes them as the “primary evolutionary form of a sense of life” (1954, 264) and thereby places them closer to the subject than any atmospheric feeling. For him, a mood “denotes a timbre of the sense of life, in which our vital *Dasein* is disclosed to us momentarily as attuned in some form or another” (1954, 264). Once again, a mood is understood as a subjective disposedness. Moreover, the remark about its *momentary* character leads to atmospheres because they can also change in the course of time and events. Both—moods and atmospheres—are not fixed entities, and for that reason, they cannot be compared to physically irreversible traits. Lersch explicitly brings moods more closely to atmospheres when he ascribes to them a “quasi-atmospheric character” (1954, 264). This is comprehensible in the light of the “beclouding” character of atmospheres. However, much more than an atmosphere, which can be perceived in a surrounding as cheerful, onerous, light or heavy, a mood can be so immersive as to envelope the entire perception.

Gernot Böhme calls our attention to another difficulty in distinguishing mood from atmosphere when he speaks of the “tuned space” and its power to alter the own disposedness: “Furthermore, the atmosphere is *tuned* space, i.e. what appears is a mood. Yet, not initially as a mood as such, but as a *tinge* of mood, something, which I perceive, because I am *falling* into this mood” (2001, 47). What Böhme denotes as a mood is not a mood in the strict sense of Heidegger’s or Bollnow’s understanding, but a tuned atmosphere, which is *on its way* to affect and thereby to become a mood. Take, for example, the twilight which tunes space in an atmospheric sense and has the potential to ignite a mood as Tonino Griffero remarks: “Twilightness might awaken in different subjects relatively different moods” (2017, 109). This brings up the question whether moods can be produced by means of intentionally created atmospheres. I return to that question towards the end of this chapter.

If we dwell on the idea of an atmosphere’s mood for a moment, it is possible to discern an etymological source of the notion of mood in the German language. Etymologically, mood has been understood as the result of an active process of attunement. Being attuned *as a state* is the outcome of an attunement *process* (Grimm and Grimm 1991, col. 3129). Originally, the term designated the tuning of instruments and was only applied to denote human feelings during the eighteenth century. Johann Gottfried Herder points to this double meaning of mood when he describes it as the outcome of an attunement of the sensations towards each other (Grimm and Grimm 1991, col. 3130). Thus, in German, mood denotes both a *process of attunement* and the affective state of *being* attuned.

Finally, when the notion of mood is used to denote a landscape’s particular attunement, this usage expresses another ambivalence. On the one hand, it signifies the attunement of an area (e.g. caused by the weather); on the other hand, an atmospherically palpable mood. Concerning the mood of a landscape, Karl Jaspers (1919, 444) notes that:

What we call a “mood” with reference to a landscape, is a collective term for sundries: 1. Plain feelings without content, 2. Movements of the soul due to a lacking subject-object-division, i.e. sprouts, which can take shape. 3. Reproduced moods and movements of the soul, which emanate from the created shapes presented from the other side.

Especially the last point brings to the fore a projectivist argument: we see and perceive a landscape according to how we *are*. A similar argument can

be found in the deliberations of Georg Simmel (1913)—albeit in a moderate fashion—when he comments that the mood of a landscape could be understood as a state of the soul, that is, an emotional reflex of the beholder. In this perspective, the mood of a landscape is simply the equivalent to *how* we feel ourselves, and it is this accordance, which has been addressed by reference to Bollnow earlier. By stating that the mood of a landscape emphasizes the subjective side of experience “in contrast to the factual form of perceiving objects”, he places it on an ambivalent level in-between mood and atmosphere (Bollnow 1941, 145). Yet, it remains unclear whether the mood of a landscape becomes simply palpable in one way or the other, or whether it also effects an affective seizure, which exerts power over our feelings.

This ambiguity is not resolved, when Bollnow talks in a similar vein about the mood of a flat (1941, 39). The attunement of a flat, which is induced by the arrangement of things and quasi-things (like the light) or the presence of plants and animals, has a significant impact on the perceptible atmospheres within it, which, in turn, *may* gain so much affective power as to tinge the personal affective state and eventually culminate in a mood. Bollnow also addresses moods when he discusses the pedagogical atmosphere in one of his works and declares that the pedagogical atmosphere should be brought to mind as *attunement* (1964, 108). Here, he does not refer to mood in a psychological sense but an atmosphere in its attunement. This underlines the fact that an atmosphere can elevate to the level of moods if its immersive power is strong enough to tinge the personal affective state.

Even Hermann Schmitz at first *seems* to let go of the differentiation between atmosphere and mood when he explains in his essay on “the Atmosphere of a City” that “the suggestions of movement and synesthetic characters are not themselves the mood or atmosphere of a city, because feelings and meanings appertain to them and are conveyed by them” (2016, 104). In this quote, he seemingly apprehends moods and atmospheres to be equivalent. He considers “atmosphere” as an umbrella term and mood as an *instance* of atmosphere. Both atmosphere and mood in Schmitz’ sense are spatially poured out feelings, while moods are characterized as feelings extending into vastness (Schmitz 1981, 259). Thereof, he distinguishes *sheer moods* (like satisfaction and despair), which extend into vastness but do not steer into a particular direction (1981, 260). However, these moods are also atmospheres; otherwise, Schmitz could not speak of the futility which is conveyed situationally in some cities’ particularly sombre atmospheres (2016, 108).

In contrast to the notion of mood as brought forward by Bollnow, Heidegger and Lipps, Schmitz thus does not consider mood to be a private state in the strict sense but *primarily* as a transpersonal atmosphere, which may unfold an affectively seizing power over the individual. Yet, his additive or equivalent use of the terms lacks conceptual clarity. In the following description of urban atmospheres, Schmitz implicitly discusses a mood of despair in the Heideggerian sense as an affectively seizing power, which radiates from a specific atmosphere:

Despair in this sense imposes itself sometimes by way of reflection on the futility of life, but also spontaneously, as a futility, which emanates directly from an atmosphere. Thus, for example from the atmosphere of a chilly and pale twilight or a dank morning in the ugly mass of houses of a metropolis or at the train station. (Schmitz 2016, 108)

Regardless of the incomprehensible impressive situation, which is ascribed to a train station in this quote, the affectively seizing feeling—in-between atmosphere and mood—remains diffuse in its origin. On the one hand, the feeling of despair arises from the “futility of life” and thereby has its origin in a highly personal mood in the Heideggerian sense. On the other hand, it radiates from the specific atmosphere of a place, namely the “ugly mass of houses of a metropolis”. Atmosphere is again a phenomenon in-between something, which emanates from the things around us, and a highly personal attunement caused by a feeling. At this stage, I only hint at a synonymy of the terms, but I return to the specific perspective of neo-phenomenology towards the end of the chapter.

2 THE ATTUNEMENT OF LIFE BY MOODS AND ATMOSPHERES

By setting the benchmarks of sensibility within which the appearance of something becomes impressive, as, for example, welcomed, idiosyncratic or neutral, moods and atmospheres exert a considerable influence over the affective life. Moods, like atmospheres, affect our sense of self in current situations, while enduring situations seem to be more strongly disposed by moods than by atmospheres. But they are not irrevocable and fixed as the example of pathological conditions, such as manic depression in psychiatry, teaches us (Lersch 1954, 272).

With recourse to Heidegger, Bollnow emphasizes moods as evidence for the a priori disposedness of *Dasein* and entrenches them in an inner realm (1941, 34, 62). But when he points to the fact that life is always disrupted by intrusions from the outside world, he alludes to atmospheres, which, in their impressive power of appearance, exert an influence on the inner realm of affective life (Bollnow 1941, 33). He goes on to say that “in any mood, the world is already ‘interpreted’ in a very specific way” (1941, 57). Hence, the possibility of overriding a mood by an atmosphere has to be taken into consideration. In other words: the attuned interpretation of the world is also influenced—if only momentarily—by atmospheres in the actuality of experience. Conversely, Bollnow accentuates (in the Heideggerian sense) that it is “determined by the mood, what can appear to man and what not” (1941, 135). As a consequence, the question arises whether moods can exert power over and be resilient vis-à-vis atmospheres.

As stated earlier by Bollnow, moods set the scene and determine to what extent atmospheres can unfold their affective power over the subjective affective state. Thus, implicitly, moods are ascribed a bigger affective power than atmospheres, and this power is thought to originate in their non-directional nature as feelings.⁴ This non-directionality of moods was already pointed out by Johannes Volkelt when he referred to their floating and hovering character: “they envelop the subjective sphere” and are “of enduring nature” (1905, 206 f.). In contrast to this non-directionality, atmospheres are directed towards and induced by something which has its origin in a worldly cause. Even the gloomiest atmosphere of a city, or the most threatening atmosphere looming between humans, is directly or indirectly bound to the objective side of a situation—that is, the manner in which an urban quarter is constructed and lived or the way people treat each other in a given situation.

Thomas Fuchs accentuates the differentiation of moods and atmospheres even further by stating that moods are grasped introspectively whereas atmospheres are perceived by the individual as approaching us from outside. “Thus, in the case of atmospheres, the induction runs from the outside to the inside, while moods are induced from within” (2000, 215). Like Bollnow, Heidegger and Lipps, he emphasizes that “moods are

⁴Nina Trcka, for example, does not understand moods as “inner” mental states, but it is understood as “felt-bodily palpable ways of being involved, the bodily-felt, subjective engagement and bodily-felt affective involvement. They are ways, in which something affects our experience and touches us deeply” (2016, 4).

the base layer or bottom, on which the more strongly moved and specifically directed feelings ascend” (2000, 217). This supports the view that moods exert a stronger influence over the experience of atmospheres than vice versa. Yet, this does only concern the question to what extent moods and atmospheres can exert power over felt-bodily states. So far, nothing has been said about the characteristic way in which they affect. For this reason, reference should be made once more to Lersch, who describes mood as a bodily felt awareness, which corresponds to an “atmospheric hovering and tinging” (1954, 265).

3 THE DYNAMIC OF ATMOSPHERES AND MOODS

During the course of this chapter, the interferences between atmospheres and moods have been dealt with at ample occasions. Therefore, I want to limit their basic investigation to some few remarks. Karl Jaspers calls attention to an interplay in which moods can both evoke and be evoked. For example, one might be inclined to say that “the walk has put him in a good mood. He clearly could behold all sensational elements as objectified, but his emotions remained indistinct or they fluctuated in-between subject and object, almost reaching to a clarifying division but never fully attaining it” (1919, 443). In other words, moods can be ignited by an encounter with something; this can be an attuned space like the atmosphere of a landscape as alluded to by this example.

Because moods are anthropological constants, one can only change but not overcome them (Bollnow 1941, 65). This is used for political rhetoric, which equally builds on the production of moods as on the rational power of arguments. Suggestions then aim at the dissuasive transformation of moods. According to Heidegger, this transformation of moods is possible because the public as the mode of being of “the one” (*Das Man*) is a priori attuned: “The public has in general its own way of having a mood, but needs moods and ‘makes’ them for itself” (1927, 178). But also within the institutionalized centres of rational reasoning, that is, the sciences, there are changing moods and not only the power of logic and plausibility of the argument. It is for these reasons, that Ludwik Fleck already spoke of “thought styles” which can be turned over and are undergirded by a collective “mood of thought” (1936, 266). Both examples, political dissuasion and the subtle enforcement of norms in scientific thought, point to a transition of moods into *attitudes* and therein lies the difference to atmospheres. “The mood denotes the natural basis and self-evidently comes

first. The attitude then denotes the remodeling, which results from the freedom of man” (Bollnow 1941, 160). Finally, Bollnow hints at an inner shift of moods when he emphasizes that moods can change their “density” situationally, even though their direction remains constant (1941, 137). At the same time, a density of feeling can be ascertained as well with regard to atmospheres, of which there are stronger and weaker, more or less powerful ones.

4 MOODS AND ATMOSPHERES AS WAYS OF INTERPRETING THE WORLD AND/OR SITUATIONS?

Heidegger regards moods as windows to the world: “We have seen that the world, Daseins-with, and existence are equiprimordially disclosed; and state-of-mind is a basic existential species of their disclosedness, because this disclosedness itself is essentially Being-in-the-world” (1927, 176). Thus, at first glance, moods seem to differ from atmospheres, in that the former disclose the world at large, while the latter only disclose situations—and thereof rather current than enduring ones. Yet, this separation is not as easily enforced as it seems. Heidegger himself breaks down the dichotomy of inside and outside: “A mood assails us. It comes neither from ‘outside’ nor from ‘inside’, but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being” (1927, 176). By situating the subject within a world of others, Heidegger suspends the idea of a purely inner world of moods. The individual shares its meanings and affective states with others, even if this sharing sometimes only means the imposition of resentments. Again, the delineation of moods and atmospheres becomes fluid as atmospheres absorb common sensitivities and the affective power that radiates from moods.⁵

The fundamental significance of moods for life does not result in an introjectionist understanding, enclosing moods in some kind of inner sphere. According to the Japanese philosopher Asuka Suehisa, one of the essential modes of human existence (*Da-Sein*) is “Being-with” and “Being-with-one-another” (2010, 69–70). Implicitly, this also means that the prevailing mood as a collective phenomenon is always socially framed, as a

⁵ If the *what* and the *how* of feeling is induced by the environment, as Slaby remarks, then this holds equally true for moods: “Not only *what* we feel, also *how* we feel is strongly determined by the environment, if not downright shaped and directed” (2010, 37). In this process, suggestions of movements and figures [*Gestaltverläufe*] play an eminent role for the constitution of moods, because as expressive gestures, they synesthetically transmit feelings.

mood or as disposedness resulting from being-with others (2010, 70). Suehisa ascribes to moods a “fundamental meaning in constituting culture” (2010, 19) and thereby raises the question whether moods becoming palpable in a greater spatial unit—such as a cultural region, a landscape or a city—instead rather have the character of atmospheres. In colloquial language, this is usually denoted with the term “mentality”. Understanding is always *this particular* understanding because as a mirror of significance it reflects a specific relation to the world (Suehisa 2010, 60). Yet, not only moods preserve meaning in the emotional domain but also atmospheres as spatially poured out feelings.

We experience the world mirrored within moods and atmospheres. With regard to this experience, Philipp Lersch detects “an examination of the world, [...] an awakening, a way of coming into the world and ipso facto the opening up of one’s own reality in its concrete authenticity” (1936, 149). In the mode of actual experience, the individual only exists as a being exposed to the world and not as self-contained. This experience can be apprehended as a sensuous, felt-bodily resonance to the world as it appears. As a consequence, Michael Großheim et al. follow Jan Patočka in regarding mood never “only as an ‘individual mood’, but as a mood in relation to others, be they present or not” (2014, 28). With that being said, every differentiation between moods and atmospheres becomes hard to retain. Because the subject does not exist as a monad, the distinction made earlier with reference to Fuchs—between mood as being rather endogenous and the atmosphere exogenous to the subject—becomes questionable. Eventually, the situationality of experience does not provide a reference point for a clear distinction, as both the experience of moods and atmospheres is situated.⁶

5 THE POWER OF FEELINGS RESIDING IN MOODS AND ATMOSPHERES

Moods and atmospheres are both situated feelings, which structure and orient the attuned human being’s relation to the world, near and far. Yet, if moods and atmospheres can neither be clearly attributed to an inside or an outside, nor a *specific* situationality (as current or enduring), then there

⁶ Rainer Wimmer describes moods with Heidegger and Bollnow not as a mirror of *exceptional* situations, but as a lifelong expression of existence. Yet, this does not mean that moods are not embedded within situations (Wimmer 1997, 143–162).

is either no difference between them or the difference lies beyond these categories of differentiation. The fact that in everyday language there are two words for these similar kinds of feelings points to a difference in the subject matter, even if this difference remains rather diffuse after the philosophical reconstruction of meanings has been made. Without the intention of reducing the yield of the differentiation between atmospheres and moods conducted earlier, it can be stated that there is no plausible characteristic of difference, which allows to clearly draw a dividing line between the two notions.

Eventually, Hermann Schmitz' neo-phenomenology provides a sensible clue for carrying out a differentiation which also helps distinguishing moods (in the Heideggerian sense) from the ubiquitous atmospheres. Schmitz differentiates between different scopes of being affected by a feeling: "One has to distinguish two meanings of 'feeling': feeling as the perception of a feeling as an atmosphere and feeling as being affectively involved by that feeling" (1993, 48). It is thus possible to perceive an atmosphere *without* being affectively seized by it. As soon as the atmosphere influences the affective state of the subject, it unfolds its emotionally attuning power over it. To illustrate with an example, take the atmosphere of mourning: one can perceive this atmosphere by witnessing a funeral procession, but one must not be forcefully moved to a state of mourning oneself. This would include affective involvement, which could be caused by the death of a close confidant or the depressive state of a dear person who is mourning over the loss of someone meaningful. In the latter case, one would be concerned with compassion, which is not an emotional sharing of grief, but a feeling of compassion which, nevertheless, is rooted in deep affective involvement.

The affective power of a mood, in contrast to an atmosphere, can be poignantly illustrated by a quote from Rainer Maria Rilke's novel *Malte Laurids Brigge*. In this section, the protagonist Malte is emotionally not able to be affected by a cheerful atmosphere in such a way that the moods of others become his own:

And their faces were full of the light that came from the carnival booths and laughter welled up and poured from their mouths like puss from an open sore. The more impatient I became trying to move forward the more they laughed and crowded tightly together [...] and people stopped me and laughed and I felt that I should laugh too but I couldn't. (Rilke [n.d.](#))

The atmosphere could not exert affective power over Malte's mood, even though the assertion "and I felt that I should laugh too" signifies that he was well aware of the emotionally authoritative power of the atmosphere directed at him. For this reason, Schmitz emphasizes once more that "the affectively seizing feeling as atmosphere should not be confounded with the feeling of being affectively seized by that very atmosphere. There is another way of feeling, i.e. the sheer perception of an atmosphere without affective involvement" (2009, 83).

It is plausible to assume that this sensing perception of an atmosphere *without* affective involvement constitutes a specific form of knowledge. Under this condition, an epistemic differentiation of different types of knowledge, which relate to one another, is needed. The emotionally neutral, factual perception of a feeling draws upon an affective or pathic knowledge, which unfolds against the backdrop of emotional experience and has a different character than the "cold" cognitive and fact-oriented knowledge. From the perspective of psychology, it is William James who remarked as early as 1890 that the common juxtaposition of feeling and knowledge is a misleading approach. In his seminal work *The Principle of Psychology*, James states that "[f]rom the cognitive point of view, all mental facts are intellections. From the subjective point of view all are feelings" (1890, 478–479). A mood can be juxtaposed in opposition to an atmosphere and vice versa. The threshold at which an atmosphere turns into a mood is equivalent to the power of a feeling to kindle an affective concern. It is this ability which makes the difference between the two of them so that there are two forms of subjective being-with: one from an emotional distance and one without.

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Japanese Atmospheres: Of Sky, Wind and Breathing

Lorenzo Marinucci

This chapter offers an introduction to three fundamental atmospheric notions deployed by Chinese and Japanese cultures, observing them both in their original context and through a neophenomenological frame. The three concepts are that of 空 *kū* “sky”, 風 *fū* “wind” and 気 *ki* “air” or “breath”. Each of them, however, shows an impressive complexity and a wide array of meanings, many of which, despite the puzzling effect on a non-Asian reader, are highly coherent. Why is the character for “sky” also the signifier for the Buddhist notion of emptiness and imagination? Why is “wind” both the chief element of “landscapes”, a signifier for the aesthetic in general and having even the sense of “culture”? Is *ki*, with its impressive use for phenomena both bodily and psychic, external and internal, an actual phenomenon in the world? Despite the risk of exoticizing the cultural difference of non-European sources or the opposite refusal of these notions as “totally other”, the potential of a cross-cultural phenomenology of atmospheres is made evident, also presenting the work of modern Japanese philosophers who have already retraced the heritage of these concepts in a philosophical perspective.

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1 OF THE TRANSCULTURAL POTENTIAL OF NEOPHENOMENOLOGY

The notion of atmosphere, at least in the full development of Schmitz's new phenomenology, derives part of its strength from the fierce polemic with much, if not most, of the Greek-European philosophical canon. Schmitz denounces how the "interiorization of the psychic" (Schmitz 2011, 247) occurring in Greek thought during the fourth century BC was the first dramatic erasure of the felt body and the diffuse pathic, unstable dimension of atmospheres. And, indeed, the ontology arising from this Platonic-Democritean shift, with its largely unexamined preference for visible forms, the sharp separation between subjective and objective and its "grinding down" of the felt-bodily elements of experience, is in many senses still the dominant paradigm for philosophical and scientific thought. It is hard not to recognize how this shift constitutes what is normally labelled (obviously with a degree of simplification) as "Western thought form".

Thus, while a surprisingly large part of the lexicon of Greek and European philosophy does ultimately arise out of terms meaning "breathing" or "air" (such as *psyche*, *pneuma*, *anima*, *spirit*, *Geist*, even *aesthesis*, see Onians 1988, 75), the effacement of the medial phenomena such as air as something never eidetically present makes it in this sense "other from being". Lacking any stable or independent identity, never being in itself but always manifesting itself *through* and *with* other things (we can say *negatively* and *transcendentally*), they are the traditional unthought of European philosophy: discovering air and atmospheres as philosophical themes means recognizing how post-Platonic Greek and Greek-based thought are not automatically the best perspective to reach out at the whole world of phenomena. Schmitz's approach to this unthought or other-from-thought is distinctly genealogical; however, he turns back to the archaic world of Homeric epics. In other words, even while new phenomenology is first of all an inquiry into "primitive presence", it includes:

[...] The chance of an evidence, that is indeed not purely phenomenological, and consists rather in a particular snap of historical findings in readied phenomenological schemata and characterizing concepts. It is in this way that I managed to make the initially highly disconcerting (*befremdliche*) and unclear perspective that lies at the ground of human self-understanding in the *Iliad* accessible to modern comprehension with the help of my phenomenology of the felt body. For me this result had something of the relevance and memorability of the Archimedean *Eureka*. (Schmitz 1997, 4)

While Schmitz's phenomenological reading of Homer and archaic Greek culture (see Schmitz 1965, 373–445) is undoubtedly relevant, what is problematic in this operation is that by keeping the conceptual rearrangement within the one axis of temporality, it conceives this philosophical “disconcert” in a still limited way: within the nexus of European thought. What if a philosophical discourse on atmosphere, “snapping” the philological in the philosophical (simply put, being a hermeneutical phenomenology) offered equally strong moments of realization in a different cultural milieu, one in which the “psychologistic-reductionist-introjectionist reduction” (Schmitz 2011, 247) is a much more recent, imperfect phenomenon and in which the observation and the attunement to felt-bodily and atmospheric experiences is much more common and by no means limited to archaic sources? A transcultural engagement with other languages and cultural histories is not only a *chance* for which neophenomenology is very well equipped, with its radical bracketing of the traditional European ontological catalogue, but also represents a *necessity*, part of the hermeneutical work and engagement with cultural otherness that is necessary for that *epochè* to be a real transformative experience and not a simple rhetorical move. As Schmitz observes, “a sudden dissolution of every naïve prejudice is impossible, if only for the fact that no one fully knows what he believes” (Schmitz 1980, 21). Part of this work, we want to argue, necessarily passes from a literal estrangement, an exposure to “foreign air”.

2 THE EAST ASIAN PHENOMENOLOGY OF AIR: THREE PARADIGMS

For instance, the effacement of air and atmosphere described by Schmitz in relation to Greek thought never happened in the Sino-Japanese cultural nexus. Process, flow, the shapeless and the unseen are all elements of reality that Chinese and Japanese cultures have, instead, considered with great attention and in different perspectives throughout their history. Without the interiorization of Greek *psyche*, atmospheric and airborne concepts have kept being active in their original organicity. Moreover, while this atmospheric-pathic dimension can be actually retraced in *most* cultures, with the European one being rather a negative exception rather than a standard,¹

¹We can think of how universally diffused is the belief in “spirits” aerial presences atmospherically perceived and exerting their effects on the body through influence or “possession”. Far from being an empty superstition, such “hauntology” is well rooted in primary mode of presence and is characteristic of what the anthropologist Ernesto de Martino



Fig. 5.1 The atmospheric manifold in Chinese-Japanese culture: “sky/emptiness”, “wind” and “*kì*/breathing”

the case of China and Japan offers the relevant advantage of a highly developed corpus of discourses and practices centred on the atmospheric paradigm, both in premodern religious and aesthetic paths and in contemporary philosophical reflections, which have developed original contributions out of this historical attunement (Fig. 5.1).

If we observe the lexicon of Sino-Japanese thought from the outset, we can see that there is not one overarching premodern concept for “atmosphere”: however, three of the most fundamental notions in religion, artistic practice, medicine and bodily cultivation in China and Japan are all directly referring to air and atmospheric experiences. They do not constitute a system: each one of them has definite conceptual overlaps with the other two, resulting in what Schmitz would call a “chaotic manifold”. In turn, a sort of fractal arrangement shows up even within these three atmospheric notions: each of them has a multitude of meanings and is not easily contained in a non-contradictory definition. They are “characters” (in the double sense of an ideographic linguistic unity and of something with an emerging quality)

referred to “presence at risk”, viz. human existence, which has not historically and existentially established itself as self-closed and independent from the world (De Martino 2007). Already close to early phenomenology in his studies, De Martino is, in this sense, another very viable interlocutor for a cross-cultural expansion of neophenomenology.

but not self-identical “concepts”. We discuss them beginning with the notion of “sky/emptiness” and that of “wind”, respectively, central in East Asian religious and aesthetic expression, leaving, last, a brief excursus on the even more complex problem of *ki/qi*, “breathing” or “spirit”.

3 空 *kū*: SKY, SPACE, EMPTINESS AND PHANTASY

The notion of “emptiness” or “hollowness” (Skr. *śūnyatā*) usually refers to the theoretical and existential understanding of the lack of self-sufficient being in all phenomena elaborated in Buddhism, especially in Mahayana and in Nagarjuna’s “Middle Way” school (Madhyamika). It is, in other words, one of the central theoretical categories of East Asian Buddhism: not an absolute negation or annihilation, but a “relative non-being” pointing at the insubstantiality and interconnectedness between phenomena that are *empty* of the absolute reality we tend to project on them. In the words of the Indian thinker Nagarjuna (AD 150–250): “Since nothing has arisen without depending on something, there is nothing that is not empty” (Nagarjuna, MMK 24.19). However, the character chosen to translate the Sanskrit in China, 空 (Ch. *kong*) while different from the notions of 無 *wu* “non-being” and 虛 *xu* “hollow” widely employed in Daoism, was unavoidably influenced by this earlier Chinese takes on “emptiness”. *Wu* and *xu* were used in early Daoism to describe the formless, non-thematic dimension that allows things and processes to emerge without ever turning itself into one: while ineffable, the term “way” (*dao*) is also used to refer to this primal state. The Daoist vision stressed relatedness too, but unlike the Indian Buddhist ideas of emptiness, which employed the identification of *śūnyatā* with a meditative state and a lack of attachment, the Chinese “non-being” is also and even mostly efficacy, inscribed in natural rhythms or even in the utility of tools, such as in *Daodejing* 11:

Thirty spokes join the wheel nave
And make of void and form a pair,
And a wagon’s put to use.
Clay is thrown to shape a vessel
And make of void and form a pair,
And a vessel’s put to use.
Door and window vent a room
And make of void and form a pair,
And a room is put to use.
Thus the value of what is
Depends for use on what is not.

(tr. Moss 2001, 51; the Chinese on the right follows Moss’ versification)

三十辐共一毂
当其无有
车之用
埴埴以为器
当其无有
器之用
凿户牖以为室
当其无有
室之用
故有之以利
无之以为用。

If we compare Daoist emptiness with that of Indian Buddhism, we can see how in a Chinese context the stress shifts on a non-abstract, non-metaphysical understanding of formlessness: in the examples above the empty space constituting the “utility” or “efficiency” (see Jullien 2004) of something is quite literally “air”. The non-objectual and formlessness of Dao have therefore so strong a commonality with atmospheric states that modern interpreters already suggested a conceptual continuum between Dao’s emptiness and the “spirit-breathing” of *qi* (Jp. *ki*):

It is reasonable to suspect that Laozi’s conception of Dao is derived from his conception of *qi* in its initial state, and based on the text, we may further argue that his notion of Dao could be an idealized conception of the nature and operation of *qi*. We find that many descriptions of Dao in the *Daodejing* are likely descriptions of *qi*. For example, the *Daodejing* depicts Dao as “containing the form and essence of things” (Chapter 21), as “soundless and formless” and “circulating incessantly” (Chapter 25), as invisible, inaudible and intangible (Chapter 14), as agitating and inexhaustible (Chapter 4), as continuous and connected (Chapter 14), as overflowing left and right (Chapter 34), and as moving in reversal (Chapter 40). If Dao is understood as a spiritual metaphysical entity, then these descriptions are difficult to interpret. However, once we understand the initial cosmic state as *qi*’s initial state, these descriptions become intelligible. (Liu 2014, 183)

Therefore, the ideal of “emptiness” expressed through the character 空, despite its origin in Buddhism, also absorbed the “atmospheric model” active in Daoism, in a way that is especially in schools like Chan (Zen as it arrived in Japan). Despite its own complex relation to Daoism, Chan/Zen integrated this double heritage, with the religious emptying of Buddhism on one side and the atmospheric cosmology of *qi* on the other, forming what can be described as an existential-performative approach to emptiness *qua* atmosphere.

The insight into the non-substantial level of reality could produce itself not only in a deep state of non-representational meditation but also (even preferentially) through an aesthetically renewed grasp of phenomenal reality, in painting or poetry, for instance, or also by an interpersonal, non-logical attunement between master and disciple. This model can be recognized in traditions like the session of question and answer between older and younger monks (問答 Ch. *wenda*, Jp. *mondō*) and the tradition of “public cases” (公案 Ch. *gong’an*, Jp. *kōan*), paradoxical histories and puzzles asked as part of monastic training, especially in the *Linji* (Jp. *Rinzai*) lineage. In both cases, the transmission of teaching does not

occur within the frame of dialectical understanding or through the logical analysis of a text: being para-logical, the grasp of emptiness attempted by Zen happens along the two great models of proprio-corporeal meditation and by the direct grasp of a “non-thing” abiding between phenomena and subjectivities. The mythological origin of Chan/Zen, employed as a “public case” in the Chinese collection *The Gateless Barrier* (無門關 Ch. *Wumenguan*, Jp. *Mumonkan*), is a good example of this latter “atmospheric” mode of transmission:

Once when the World-Honoured One, in ancient times, was upon Mount Grdhrakuta, he held up a flower before the congregation of monks. At this time all were silent, but only Venerable Kasyapa’s face broke into a smile. The World-Honoured One said, “I have the Eye of the True Law, the Secret Essence of Nirvana, the Formless Form, the Mysterious Law-Gate. Without relying upon words and letters, beyond all teaching as a special transmission, I pass this all on to Mahakasyapa”. (Blyth 1974, 76)

In Zen, this direct diffusion is also said to be “from heart to heart” (Jp. *ishindenshin*); but again, the state of non-logical togetherness at the core of this transmission of emptiness is able to bypass “words and letters” because it engulfs masters and disciples in a particular atmosphere. A smile or a gaze are not the external manifestation of an internal content that could, even ideally, be turned into concepts: they are quasi-things, the modalities in which distinct subjectivities permeate each other in a common atmospheric space. Indeed, on an interpersonal level, atmospheres manifest themselves as “inexplicable radiations” and with their authority “cause people to form groups that bear witness” to them (Tellenbach 1981, 229). Just as in the case of a smile or a shared joke, that happen through less on a linguistic, propositional level and more out of a transpersonal, pathic background of experience, emptiness is atmospheric both with its aesthetic involvement with natural phenomena and in its inclusion of emotive hues.

Making even more explicit the non-difference between emptiness as a religious category and actual atmospheric aspects of reality is the direct lexical connection between the two. The character 空, etymologically a “hole” or “gap” opened with a mason tool (工) has from early on several meanings including, most importantly for us, also that of “sky”. In modern Japanese, for instance, the character 空 can mean, alone or in compounds, “sky” (*sora*), “air” (*kūki*), “imagination” (*kūsō*), “empty” in a

Fig. 5.2 The character 空 in seal style calligraphy



practical sense, such as in *karaoke* (lit. “empty orchestra”) or *karate* (“empty hands”) a feeling of “melancholia” or “tranquility” (*kūjaku*), together with the aforementioned Buddhist technical use (Fig. 5.2).

In what sense can “sky” and “emptiness” be connected? This question is the guiding line of one of Nishitani Keiji’s last essays, 空と即 *Kū to soku* “Emptiness and sameness”. Nishitani (1900–1990) was a central figure in the Kyoto school of philosophy, a disciple of Nishida who tried to reformulate the still very abstract insight into a philosophy of “absolute nothingness” of his teacher into a more direct existential comprehension of “emptiness”.

It is such attempt to compenetrare concrete and transcendental that led him to bring “Zen poetry, religion, literature, and philosophy all together in his work” (Heisig 2001, 188). In *Kū to soku* this trend is evident: this is the step that allows Nishitani to ask how the phenomenic sky, poetic *Stimmung*, imaginary process and the apparently abstract “emptiness” of Buddhism are actually one:

The character for “emptiness/sky” (空 *kū*) is often used in combination with the character “void” (虚 *ko*). However, the compound in this case indicates the “sky” one sees with one’s eyes (虚空 *kokū* = empty sky). The sky is an eternally constant empty space with unlimited depth and endless width. It is the only “eternal thing” we can see with our eyes. The sky of the visible world has been used in scriptures as an image (*Bild*) to indicate eternally unlimited things that cannot be seen with the eye, or eternal limitlessness. With that meaning, the words “sky” and “empty sky” can be seen fundamentally as metaphors, although there is something that cannot be reduced to a simple metaphor. The empty sky, to the extent that one can see it with the eye, is a given fact and a reality. Even if it is supposed to indicate the limitless eternity that one cannot see with the eye, there is a much more strict relationship than a metaphorical link between the visible phenomenon and the invisible thing indicated by those words. Earlier I used the word “image”, but actually the empty sky visible to the eye has no form, and, in a strict sense, one cannot say

it is a figure or image. Rather, one should say that it is a visible image without form. In this case, the relationship between the visible and the invisible thing is not clearly defined. [...] We can only say that this relationship has an intimacy that exceeds logic. (Marra 1999, 179–180)

This non-difference between the phenomenal sky and the understanding of a fundamental level of reality is strikingly close to the famous remark by Goethe in the *Theory of Colours* about the way in which the ultimate identity of facts and theory can be recognized in the sky blue. But the similarity is more than a chance: the *quale* of colour, or in phenomenological terms *hyle*, comes forth to consciousness always as the matter of a relation between subject and world that comes before stabilized forms and concepts. The very word for the whole world of phenomena in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism is 色 *shiki* (Ch. *sè*), a character that also means “colour”, “passion” and “affect”. The sky as atmospheric image (or image of the atmospheric) is emptiness itself, and yet not opposed or other from the phenomenal. In a Buddhist context, this “absolutely contradictory identity” between phenomenal and non-phenomenal is described by the connector *soku* 即, which is used to describe a relation between two poles that are, at the same time, the same and totally other. Thus, the pivotal expression of the *Heart Sutra*: 色即是空、空即是色 “Phenomenality is nothing else than emptiness, emptiness is nothing else than phenomenality”. This paradoxical coincidence is moreover expanded to “feeling, discrimination, conditioning factors and consciousness” (Lopez 1996, vii). If the image of emptiness in the phenomenal world is the non-cosial expanse of the sky, the relationship between emptiness and feelings is also a primary moment of this atmospheric disclosure of reality. We listed the particular mood of calm melancholia (空寂 *kūjaku*) among the list of compounds above, but Nishitani insists on the importance of this affective-atmospheric dimension of emptiness:

The words “sky/emptiness” and “empty sky”, along with permeating Buddhism and being used as Buddhist terms in scripture, have come to be used to express a Buddhist-like feeling. Rather than being a logical expression of Buddhist dharma, these are sensory expressions of those principles. [...] The form in which emptiness as a Buddhist doctrine has permeated the sensory world is Chinese and Japanese art. Particularly this permeation appears in painting and poetry. (Marra 1999, 180)

Together with earlier examples of Chinese poetry and Japanese *haikai*, in his essay Nishitani uses as an example a poem by Saigyō (1118–1190), an aristocrat turned wandering monk and poet at the end of the Heian period:

The smoke of Fuji
Trailing in the wind
Disappears in the sky:
Are there my thoughts
In a direction unknown?

*Kaze ni nabiku
Fuji no keburī no
sora ni kiete
yukue mo shiranu
waga omoi kana*

風になびく
富士の煙の
空に消えて
行方も知らぬ
我が思ひかな

The word *omoi*, “thoughts”, has in premodern Japanese a distinct affective tone; it refers to the continuum of intellectual and affective involvement with the world. As Saigyō contemplates the volcanic smoke of Fuji, the connection between the atmospheric landscape and his thoughts is not a simple simile: the juxtaposition between smoke and thought pivots around the third verse *sora ni kiete*, which contemporarily refers to the smoke “disappearing in the sky” and to his emotions “dissolving into nothingness” in a direction unknown to himself. Rather than a private cogito, a self-sufficient consciousness that is able to assert its *ergo sum* at the cost of forsaking a direct connection to the world, the Japanese *omoi* shows a total availability to “not being” itself, in the double sense of disappearing into things and of reaffirming itself as “transfer of the sky into the space of the transient impermanence of the poet’s heart” (in Marra 1999, 183). Just as there is no absolute difference between phenomenal reality and absolute emptiness, here the emotive overtones and what appears before one’s eyes are not divided as two sets of events occurring along and inside/outside divide. Poetic and religious language are unique, observes Nishitani, in their reliance to linguistic forms that directly instantiate this “reciprocally revolving” coexistence of concrete phenomena and transcendental unreality: images and imagination are a privileged axis of manifestation of emptiness in the Buddhist sense. The sense of “imaginary” included in the character 空 is therefore another distinctive element of this atmospheric compound.

The full scope of Nishitani’s essay greatly exceeds the synthesis that we can attempt here. Suffice to say that out of the three atmospheric paradigms we chose to explore, that of sky-emptiness is no less connected than the other two to concrete, daily occurrences: as concrete as windows, wheels, an overcast sky or a sense of melancholia. And yet this phenomenal concreteness is also religiously charged: we ought to stress how the notion

of emptiness allowed both Daoism and Buddhism to produce a transcendence that does not, however, involve a negation of the phenomenal. In turn, an atmospheric (neo)phenomenology, often inheriting a sometime univocal stress on present and presence, can learn from this vision of the atmospheric to include in its model forms of non-absolute, relational negativity and the imaginary element that is an important part of such atmospheric mind.

4 風 *Fū*: WIND, STYLE, CULTURE AND POETRY

Out of many *Halbdinge*, wind has received a good deal of phenomenological attention. Already Hermann Ammann, a colleague and friend of Husserl, included in his essay *Zum deutschen Impersonale* (Ammann 1929) a long reflection about a phenomenon in which cause and effect coincide and in which “we cannot distinguish between this movement and the manifestation of wind itself” (Ogawa 2000, 39). More recently, Griffero (2013, 11–14) developed an eightfold analysis of quasi-things starting from wind: in its paradoxical manifestation, wind is an all-common phenomenon that however manifests itself without a shape or a temporal continuity, never arising by itself but only appearing through and with other things (including our living bodies). It would be false to state that this shapelessness, utter liberty and spatio-temporal discontinuity have been only recognized in China or Japan. We can think of the famous (especially among neo-phenomenologists) pass of John 3.8, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit”. Here, the phenomenal wind and the holy ghost are expressed by the same Greek word *pneuma*, recognizing a homeomorphism, if not a full identity, between the atmospheric force and a not-yet hypostasized divine presence (Schmitz 1997, 12–42).

In the case of China and Japan, however, we deal not only with the survival of this more-than-metaphoric connection between airflows and the “spiritual”, a lexical fossil in Greek and European philosophy. If we observe the semantic width covered by the character 風 “wind” and its compounds, we find a wider family of meanings, with a distinct inclination for aesthetic signifier. 風 “wind” expresses the “style” of an artwork or of the artist herself: it is the common radiance that allows to recognize the artist in the work or, conversely, the work in the artist. As the non-cosial element radiating from individual objects and presences, such as the “wind-body” (風体 *fūtei*) or “wind-hue” (風采 *fūsai*) of someone,

it constitutes their “air”. As this active atmospheric element, wind comes to characterize also the wider dimension of what in European languages is always *land*-scape. In Japanese expressions such as “wind and light” (風光 *fūkō*), “wind and shade/sight” (風景 *fūkei*) or “*ki* and colour” (気色 *kes-hiki*) are all normally translated into “landscape” without asking whether this stress on the aerial rather than on earth does imply some difference. Moreover, even the general sense of emotional effusion in a beautiful place, *recognized* rather than *projected* on them, is already referred to in medieval poetic treatises as “wind-feelings” (風情 *fuzei*):

Fuzei is not something arising from the side of our feelings, it belongs to the side of the landscape (*fūkei*); As Ōmori Shōzō explains, *fūzei* is at the same time “atmosphere and expression (*hyōjō*): it belongs to the landscape exactly in the same sense of the expressions on a man’s face [...] a sad expression is known together with the eyes, mouth and nose on a man’s face, it is not a secondary emotive reaction brought forth from knowing of the face which becomes the stage of this emotion”; and equally, “the awe-inducing *fūzei* of a snow-covered mountain in a moonlit night is known *indissociably* from the shapes of the mountain and the whiteness of the snow”. (Tanaka 2013, 59)

The elemental aesthetic reality of such “windscares” thus does not reside in the distanced or objective appreciation that is afforded by the stable objects of the landscape (not coincidentally, a genre that in Europe developed itself in the early modern period) but in a wider atmospheric involvement. Especially in poetic examples, such windscares are “neither landscape nor simple vision, but the air or state of the sky, both looked at and felt” (Sasaki 2006). Wind is in this sense not a secondary event in a stabilized three-dimensional spatiality, but the opening up of a distinctive, emotively charged topology of places. Human sensibility and cognition are thus recognized as something that share with wind this effusion into a dynamic field arising moment by moment out of atmospheric settings such as light, season, distance, etc. To quote another poem by Saigyō in which this consubstantiality is made clear:

Even in a person
most times indifferent
to things around him
they awaken feelings –
the first winds of autumn.

Oshinabete
mono o omowanu
bito ni sae
kokoro o tsukuru
aki no hatsukaze

おしなべて
物を思はぬ
人にさえ
こころをつくる
秋の初風

The verb *omou* returns in this poem too: *mono o omowanu*, here translated as “being indifferent” is literally “not thinking/feeling things”, another index showing how the Japanese *omoi* is not an abstract logical thinking but an emotive, ecstatic participation to reality. “Thinking things” is letting them appear affectively and atmospherically, not simply as represented objects. In this emotive-cognitive model, wind is most literally a *moving* force: *kokoro o tsukuru* what we must translate as “awaken feelings” is in Japanese the expression “produces heart”. The emotive involvement that emerges from our existing in a place is thus first of all manifesting itself in the atmospheric. Even someone that has grown indifferent to the atmospheric ecstasies surrounding things—their colours, dynamic suggestions, scent and taste—surrounding him- or herself with an array of more stable or dead things is still exposed to the sudden movement of wind, forced to rediscover this ulteriority and non-thematic presence as a modality of existence. An equally famous European example in which wind blowing carries with itself the same existential-aesthetic reminder is the famous line at the end of Valéry’s *Le cimetière marin*: “The wind is rising ... we must try to live!” It is not a chance that the same line was reused by Hori Tatsuo as the title of the autobiographical novel adapted into an animation movie by Hayao Miyazaki: the sense of the verse becomes obvious in a Japanese perspective.

This attunement to wind is particularly evident in two families of meanings. The first covers the field of what European modernity has come to call aesthetics. Not only wind is used to express key aesthetic lemmata such as “style”, “landscape” or “feelings”, but in its mode of manifestation is recognized as a medial structure of the aesthetic *in general*, producing something that the modern philosopher of art Imamichi Tomonobu has called “aesthetics of wind” (*kaze no bigaku*):

The way in which through its action the heart (心 *kokoro*), all while keeping itself invisible, tries to reach a far ideal through the mediation of visible figures (姿 *sugata*) is exactly like the way in which with its action a gust of wind blowing on the leaves keeps revealing its moving image (*sugata*) all while keeping itself invisible, breathing from tree to tree in the distant light. Heart, due to its depth, has a sort of “aesthetic overtone” that is similar to the essence (本情 *honjō*) of wind, which can only be glimpsed by the trembling of trees. (Imamichi 1980, 277–278)

Poetry in particular carries the strongest connection with wind: the model of “inspiration” as an atmospheric possession, still lingering in the Platonic *Ion* and surviving today even in common language, is also prominent in China and Japan. Some of the oldest, most complex ideals of poetic life all share something with the paradoxical manifestation of wind: 風流 *fūryū* “wind-flow” is an ideal of aesthetic freedom that refers at the same time to the absolute individuality of the recluse, abandoning society to delve into nature, and to the libertine recognizing the same liberty in erotic playfulness and irony. 風雅 *fūga*, a term favoured by Bashō (AD 1644–1694) further identified the poetic life with a general creative sense present in the natural world, parallelly manifesting itself into the endless flow of natural creativity and in the equally boundless imaginary world of arts. 風狂 *fūkyō* “wind-madness” refers to ceaseless opposition of religio-aesthetic striving to the positive, unproblematic realities of the common world. As noted by Karaki Junzō in his cross-cultural study *Poetry and Decadence* (1952):

As it ceaselessly blows on the common world, the voice of wind reaches consciousness by the existence of the resisting things composing that world, discovering itself by this resistance without ever ceasing to exist as wind. When *fūkyō* fixes itself in a rigid state it is not *fūkyō* anymore. Therefore, it does not only oppose itself to the common world, but it must be constantly ironic towards what of that common world is present in itself. (Karaki 1981, 48–49)

The other striking sense that wind carries in China and Japan, also tightly connected to this aesthetic quality, is that of “culture”. As Ōhashi Ryōsuke wrote in his seminal essay on this topic, just as in the case of the European landscapes, the pole highlighted in European notions of culture is invariably that of the earthen, the solid, the manipulable:

The concept of “culture” contains, as long as it is understood from the Latin word *colere*, a connection to Earth, and hence nature. [...] As we said the experience of nature is present and has a fundamental meaning in the European concept of “culture” only insofar such *colere* means a precise way in which human beings are relating to nature. With the *colere*, the cultivation, human beings have begun to take care of this nature, to build it, and finally to exploit it. Here lies the “technic” in the original sense of the Greek word (*technē*), the exceptional capacity of human being, that develops itself together with “science” and makes nature the object of natural sciences. Through this relation the human being becomes already, as Descartes said,

“Master and owner of nature,” or with Kant “End of nature” (*Zweck der Natur*). The European techne-culture, which today shapes the whole world, comes from a particular relation with nature, that in the Japanese “wind-culture” or “nature-culture” was almost unknown. (Ōhashi 1984, 80–85)

But as Ōhashi notes, Chinese and Japanese cultures have never conceptualized culture as an extractive, rooted element, leaning on the human side along a split dividing humans and earth, nature and culture. Wind-culture is rather a medial phenomenon, that *just like wind* emerges out of the mutual engagement of stable and unstable, formed and formless. Wind expresses such interfacing of human and natural, in which the first acknowledges its existential projection into lived space and the latter is never reduced to a collection of positively given objects:

It is said often in common language that this *Land* [region and earth] has certain wind-customs (風俗) or wind-uses (風習). These expressions do not simply mean customs and uses in general, but the specific way of the wind, that emerges vanishes through and as the movement of a land. The association with wind here is significative: it also shows that the customs and uses as cultural phenomena of a folk are seen not only as products of the history of this population, but also as a natural phenomenon. (Ōhashi 1984, 82)

Ōhashi’s contribution has the merit of concentrating on a comparison with the European notions of culture, but the Japanese philosopher who first recognized this atmospheric model of culture-spaces is Watsuji Tetsurō. In his 1935 masterpiece *Fūdo* (Watsuji 1961), Watsuji gathered his wide knowledge of East Asian religious and aesthetic cultures, of European philosophy and his concrete experiences as a traveller during his travel and research stay in Europe. The word 風土 *fūdo* has been translated as “human-natural climate” or “human *milieu*”, but is literally *wind-and-earth*, and must be understood phenomenologically through this relational, atmospheric sense that connects in an inextricable nexus the visible, formed and stable and the invisible, fluid and formless. *Fūdo* in fact qualifies space without implying an absolute division between subjective and objective, nature and culture. Questioning the exclusive stress on individual and temporality in European thought, still lingering even in Heidegger, Watsuji does not simply advocates for an “East Asian” form of collectivity and spatiality, but on the reciprocal involvement of both poles in a dynamic, self-contradictory plexus of “human existence” (*ningen son-zai*). Human existence is at the same time individual and collective, his-

toric and climatic; its existing is in other words a literal “discovering itself outside of itself”, in the wind and earth of *fūdo*. Unlike “nature”, which can be abstracted from human presence and conceived objectively, *fūdo* is a coexistence of solid and flowing, fully present and absent that always already includes particular forms of life “as a structural moment” no less basilar than temporality.

Watsuji’s works bear a more than passing consonance with atmospheric phenomenology: from his first analysis of “cold” or of the “freshness of a morning air”, to the characterization of Asian *fūdo* as “monsoonal” and of the Japanese one as “typhonic”, the character “wind” is not simply in the title of the work, but carries its double meaning of concrete atmospheric effect *and* signifier of culture and peculiar style throughout the work. Recognizing Watsuji’s contribution to a phenomenology of culture as a recognition of atmospheric efficacy could also help settle a recurrent criticism of his work, according to which the idea of *fūdo* would end up in a “climatic determinism”. If *fūdo* is a non-objective atmospheric dimension, hence *milieu* in a quasi-cosial sense, it does not exert a three-polar, mechanical causality in which a thing and its effect can be divided: as noted by Schmitz, the efficacy of the quasi-cosial is that of a pure action, in which force and effect coincide. As an all-involving and yet always particular dynamic, wind-culture and cultural-natural milieu are nothing prior and separated from the actual free agency of human (collective-individual) human existence. The East Asian aesthetics and phenomenology of wind is, in this sense, also an invitation to develop a cross-cultural neophenomenology for “culture” itself.

5 気 *Ki*: BREATHING, COSMIC AND *LEIBLICH*

The notion of *ki* (Ch. *qì*) is by far the most complex and pervasive of the three atmospheric paradigms we touch in this analysis. Not only it overlaps with the other two, as we already saw, but it covers an impressively wide array of phenomena. While the first primary field of 空 *kū* is the religious-aesthetic and the notion of 風 *fū* is mostly connected to art, the idea and experience of *ki* is much more pervasive, referring to actual weather, air and breathing, to bodily states, to perceptual impressions, interpersonal relationships, emotive states, wilfulness and more.

Given this extreme width of meaning, it might seem that the notion of *ki* actually means *too much*, risking on one hand to be outright discarded as a metaphysical idea with no heuristic value and on the other to be

appreciated only out of exoticizing projections. Here, we would like to argue instead that *ki* does carry a strong explanatory meaning, granted that it can be read as a phenomenological notion and not as a hypostasized substance.

But how can we approach *ki* discursively, that is outside of the first-person, embodied practices that constitute, in both China and Japan, a no less (or even more) fundamental way to recognize its workings? As a quasi-thing, *ki* is hard to pin down to a propositional, self-identical concept. It historically arises out of atmospheric experiences, however. As Ogawa Tadashi points out in his book *Phenomenology of Wind and Atmospheres*:

The word *ki* originally meant something natural [自然的なもの *shizen-tekina mono*] that like steam, mist or dew surrounded human beings or filled the space between sky and earth. If we look at the character for *ki* it refers to a kind of vapor or gas and was referred to as “atmosphere” [*fum'iki*, literally “the surrounding air”] when it floated around human bodies. *Ki* is also the particular “air” that surrounds the individual human being. This is why the aura or atmosphere emanated by a certain person is referred to as his or her “wind-body” (風体 *fūtei*). On the other hand, however, *ki* is our breath; and it is by breathing that we live. *Ki* also means air and wind and at the same time it refers to the movements and processes that we feel within our bodies. (Ogawa 2000, 3)

Let us think for a moment on this sense. Vapours manifesting themselves in the morning mists, lingering between presence and non-presence themselves and, in turn, hiding and revealing the surrounding “windscape”, which concretely manifests itself “out of” and “with” this formless, aerial *hyle*: this is the first, cosmic aspect of *ki*. It is no small chance, if we follow Watsuji’s reflections on *fūdo*, that an ontology of light, presence and self-enclosed things arose in the “brightness of Greece” and its dry *fūdo*, whereas Chinese, Indian and Japanese worldviews all carry with themselves the mark of monsoon winds and their huge humidity, blurring the boundaries between subjects and objects, inside and outside, stable and fleeting (Watsuji 1961, 78). Even a cursory glance at the relevance of mists in Chinese and Japanese landscape painting is a pretty clear testimony of this cultural-climatic feature (Fig. 5.3):

This love for and reliance on this “void space” or “exceeding white” (余白 *yohaku*), a recurring principle of Chinese and Japanese landscape painting, is therefore not simply based on a process of abstraction. It rather mirrors the particular, concrete mode of unfolding of presence in a space



Fig. 5.3 Hasegawa Tōhaku (1539–1610), Pine Trees

within which objects are not independent and reciprocally opposed realities, but rather arise out and return into an envining atmosphere.² The great stress on *qi/ki* in Sino-Japanese painting is to be understood through this recognition of atmosphere as the essential aesthetic dynamic of spatial manifestation. Much before than as a system of objects, such hazy “wind-scape” manifests itself as general sphere of affection; in turn, the brush is able to reproduce this affectedness because its calligraphic movement can be attuned to the same flow, which occurs first and foremost in an expansion and contraction of the living-body. This is the position exposed by the Song dynasty painter and theorist Jing Hao (AD 855–915) in his influential dialogue *Notes on Brushwork* (筆法記 *Bifa ji*):

Likeness can be obtained by shapes without *qi*, but when truth is reached, *qi* and its qualitative matter (氣質 *qizhi*) are fully expressed. He who tries to express *qi* through ornamental beauty will make dead things [...]. *Qi* makes the heart (mind) move along the movements of the brush and seize without hesitation the external shape of things. (Sirén 1963, 235, tr. modified)

² Interestingly, it is not that European art thoroughly lacks mists and hazes: they rather arose with *Sturm und Drang* and Romantic sensibilities. In Europe, the aesthetic category most connected to this kind of views, rather than simple beauty, is that of the sublime, itself characteristic of the liminal situation in which extreme distance or vastness make impossible to form an objective picture of one’s surroundings. The Japanese aesthete Ōnishi Yoshinori highlighted in the 1939 volume *Yūgen and Aware* how the classical Sino-Japanese aesthetic ideal of 幽玄 *yūgen*, “vague and indistinct” also recognizes the aesthetic effect of what lies on the fringe between manifest and non-manifest.

Hence the very same air-like dynamic of manifestation shaping and dissolving forms in the outer world is recognized as a rhythm acting through the human body. Here the sense of *ki* as breathing pointed by Ogawa is probably clearer: the upmost vicinity of the breathing, feeling body perfectly mirrors the broader flow of cosmic *qi*. This is not simply a metaphorical connection: in a cold morning, the same vapours shrouding far away mountains come in and outside of one's own body as breath. This is a fact so obvious that it has been deemed ignorable by most European philosophy: while Plato still addresses breathing in the *Timaeus* (78e-79a), acknowledging that the body "is rooted in what from the perspective of the body itself would seem an external reality, that is the world" (Ogawa 2000, 6) the focus on consciousness and rational mind as markers of human existence eventually bring to a vision of the body, mind and emotions in which breathing is at best a physiological process, and at worst completely forgotten. Škof and Berndtson have humorously highlighted how Descartes' own "thinking thing", in its shutting down of the senses and declaring its independence from the world of perception, is either forgetting or wilfully lying about its persisting dependency on breathing. Had he really stopped smelling and breathing, his delve into "pure and indubitable self-knowledge would have manifested itself as a gradual sense of discomfort, leading ultimately to a dreadful experience of anxiety [...] his sole thought would have been *I am feeling terrible. How long can I hold my breath?*" (Škof and Berndtson 2018, xii). This "oblivion of air", the non-thematic and always available otherness in which the embodied self has realizes itself as relation-with and not as an independent reality, is not at all limited to modern philosophy: Irigaray (1999) has shown how this apparently trivial erasure is still a central feature of Heidegger's philosophy.

The idea of *ki* is therefore particularly relevant since it not only suggests an attention for the hazy, flowing, non-objective aspects of phenomena, but because around it become possible a distinctively atmospheric view of the body and of emotions. As we tried to point out elsewhere (Marinucci 2018, 109), breathing bears this unique significance in East Asian cultural forms since it is the concrete, constant realization of four kinds of self-contradictory identities (following that is the 卽 *soku* model): that between (a) external and internal, (b) tension and distension, (c) psychic and physical and (d) voluntary and involuntary. Embodiment, if understood not from the perspective of an objectified somatic body, but around the "hollow" breathing body as the *place* in which these four dimensions are rhythmically meeting and modulating each other, is a process rather than

Fig. 5.4 The historical progression of the early forms of the character *qi/ki*



a state, with its relative coordinates realizing a constant and fundamental exchange in the form of an “atmospheric ecstasis” with the world, other subjectivities, even objects.

To further clarify this point and show how this dynamic interconnection is much less mystical as it might sound, we can observe the concrete graphic etymology of the character *qi/ki*. In its oldest variants, it is composed by three kinetic lines, later shown as hovering over another pictograph representing rice (米) (Fig. 5.4):

While the metonymic and metaphoric processes still recognizable in this kind of graphic etymologies ought not to be exaggerated, the example of the cooked rice is quite revealing. While a clump of cooked cereals is surely recognizable as an object, with a stable, visible shape and clearly distinguishable from an observing subject, the case with the cloud of steam that it emanates is much more complex. This vapour pertains to the specific object and yet goes beyond it. It is shapeless, with no clear boundaries, impermanent and only marginally visible: as we perceive it, we also see it disappearing, that is diffusing itself to the point of unperceivability in the surrounding air. We could not point where exactly the rice steam ends and the anonymous, cosmic mass of air begins. This vapour is no *substance*, in the sense of a permanent thing on which attributes could be predicated, but rather *hyle*, sensuous matter in the phenomenological sense. Such primary qualitative level is the first and most pervasive presentation of something, even beyond its effective presence. The word *essentia*, coined as an attempt to transfer in the less abstract Latin the Greek *ousia*, unwillingly testifies with its double sense that the very truth of something might linger in the atmospheric excess of its scent.

The *ki* carries with it (or rather *is*) the damp, rich emanation of rice, it can stir hunger, recall memories and surround with a sense of warmth that cannot be simply reduced to a matter of objective temperature. Scent is, with Tellenbach, a “sense of proximity”, reaching us within our own bodies without the (apparently) absolute separation between outside and inside granted by sight, hearing, technical manipulation. In smelling and tasting, senses that deal with *ki* rather than objects, “the subject blends

with the world” (Tellenbach 1981, 223) and the world conversely blend with the subject. Scent, the one sense grafted on the vital, insuppressible process of breathing, is in this sense the atmospheric sense par excellence (see Griffero 2010, 63–69).

It is worth noting that Tellenbach’s renewed attention towards scent, taste and atmosphere as a paradigm of understanding, uncommon in a European scholar, is itself the result of a transcultural encounter with the *ki*-based psychiatry developed by Kimura Bin (1931–). During Kimura’s stay in Germany in the 1960s, Tellenbach was exposed to a paradigm of thought that not only highlighted the perceptual aspects of the atmospheric but also recognized the decisive role of this non-thematic medium for *emotive* and interpersonal life. Tellenbach himself explicitly recognizes this comparatively higher salience of atmospheric paradigms in Japanese culture:

It is a fact—but not a chance—that for the oriental lifeworld, and above all for the Japanese picture and idea of the world, that the atmospheric as “what surrounds” (*das Umgreifende*) has a much greater significance than in our zones. The original ground on whose dimension the relation of a human to the other-human (*Mitmenschen*) is anchored, shows with a surprising explicitness the characters of the atmospheric. The Japanese describes this origin, this something that originally pervades everything, providing him his being-with (*Mitsein*), with the work *ki*. A merit of Kimura is having grasped this *ki* in its fundamental actuality and having fruitfully developed with it the field of comprehension of psychopathology. (Tellenbach 1968, 57)

In fact, as it was stressed in the case of sky-emptiness and of wind, the dimension of *ki* is not limited to a perception of the outside world, but it includes emotive qualities that are present in our surrounding environment, both “natural” and “human”, as well as the subtle alternation of constraint and freedom that modulates both breathing and our emotional life. In modern, colloquial Japanese (much more than in Chinese, in which the use word *qi* is mostly limited to weather and traditional medicine), *ki* is used in a multitude of idioms describing cognitive-emotive processes. This “atmospheric mind” is not an internal propriety of the ego, but a mobile relation of self-and-world and self-and-other, an *aida* (Kimura, in turn influenced by Watsuji). A *ki*-based model of consciousness shares with both classical phenomenological intentionality and Heideggerian care (*Sorge*) the recognition of relatedness as the fundamental style of our

being in the world; what is distinctive about the idea of *ki* is that its effusive state is chiefly described in China and Japan by means of a “fluid model” (Hisayama 2014, 54), that is, as an immersion in a mobile medium (never thematic in itself) that in its most original sense precedes both subjects and objects. As Ogawa Tadashi synthesizes in his conjoined reading of Schmitz’s atmosphere and *ki*:

The totality of atmosphere (*fun’iki*), manifesting itself within human existence before anything as world-horizon or as a modality of ex-sistence in the world, is the pre-predicative, pre-logic dimension of “between” human and world. Within the totality of the situation revealed by this atmosphere, things, human body and human consciousness fuse and overlap with each other. [...] Atmosphere determines us human beings before our identification with a subject and our independence from objects; it gives an orientation to the world surrounding us. Atmosphere and mood are what first makes possible the appearance of a world within human existence. (Ogawa 2000, 14)

It would be wrong, however, to unilaterally stress the dimension of indistinction and reciprocal fusion that is opened up as *ki*; as Yamaguchi Ichirō correctly reminds, the conceptual efficacy of *ki* lies in its activity in “three fields”, namely “before the split between subject and object”, “in the split” and “in the body-soul unity achieved after this division” (Yamaguchi 1997, 45). None of these dimensions offers a less valid insight into the phenomenon of *ki* as such. In other words, even the cosmic unity or “oceanic feeling” offered by the first view of *ki* and the embodied, personal mastery achieved through years of martial, meditative or artistic practice are not “more essential” manifestations of *ki* than daily, banal phenomena such as a shift of attention, an impression, a feeling of discomfort or a sudden liking of someone else, all recognized as configurations of *ki* in colloquial Japanese.

We attempt here to offer a lexical map of these expressions. Rather than simply listing them, we attempted a first organization along two axes: the first goes from the subjective to the objective, or better from the *leiblich* to the cosmological aspects of *ki*; along the second, we tried to make justice of the cognitive aspects (intention, attention, will) of the *ki*-flow, progressively arising from the interpersonal and affective ones. The notion of *kibun*, mood or *Stimmung*, holds the same middle ground between the more personalized sensation/perception expressed by the term *kimochi* (literally “the *ki* I have with myself”) and the atmospheric as a form of



Fig. 5.5 A mapping of the meanings of *ki* in modern Japanese

world disclosure (*fun'iki* "the encompassing *ki*-mist"). At the rightmost extreme, we find the more objectified manifestations of weather and climate. Even this cosmic aspect is constantly connected with the others; however, expressions like 陽氣 *yōki* and 陰氣 *inki*, today mostly used in the physio-psychological sense of "bright and cheerful" and "gloomy", are literally "of *yang*-attuned *ki*" and "of *yin*-attuned *ki*", referring that is to the manifesting on a personal level of the cosmic alternation of light and darkness. Objective and subjective ought to be understood as relative (and relational) rather than absolute coordinates (Fig. 5.5).

Each of these clusters would without doubt require a specific phenomenological attention, with the necessary discussion of literary and sociolinguistic materials, as attempted, for instance, by Hisayama in the case of the "ki-based impression" (気配 *kehai*; Hisayama 2014, 62–75) and of the description of *ki* phenomena in the novels of Natsume Sōseki or in Ogawa's discussion of Japanese chained link poetry as an example of ki-based interpersonal composition (Ogawa 2011, see also ch. 16 of the present book). Even on a preliminary stage, however, it is important to show how this extreme polysemy, rather than arising from a lack of clarity, might be a methodological necessity in understanding the differently active aspects of atmospheric phenomena.

6 CONCLUSION

Each of the three paradigms discussed in this text would deserve a much more detailed discussion, accompanied by the sobering reminder of how their non-conceptual character does not allow for such analyses to be both abstract and exhaustive. A hermeneutical phenomenology of atmospheres wanting to expand its scope towards these East Asian appreciations of wind, breathing, sky and air ought therefore to rediscover these insights also through embodied practice, physical exposure to travel and different models of climate (along Watsuji's own sense of *fūdo*), to include linguistic and interpersonal otherness alongside any other textual access.

Chinese and Japanese insightful identification of "culture" and a movement of air, in other words with a surrounding atmosphere, ultimately points us to another surprising conclusion: in an intercultural atmospherology, content and method might very well coincide. Rather than being a simple afterthought or an (still laudable) attempt at philosophical decolonization, the status of atmospheres as something essentially "between" the self and the other, the I and the world, also calls for a connective, fluid model of identity and intercultural understanding. The atmospheric mind, once liberated from the forceful introjection of European metaphysics, could be freed also from the univocal sense of self-possession and stable identity projected on this "inside", out of which the earthbound sense of culture as "rooting" depends. Rather than stressing how the atmospheric paradigm is "better" expressed or quantitatively more relevant in East Asia, we want to argue that the atmospheric, as something universal and yet always specific and located at the same time, represents a resource, even a necessity, for a philosophy redefining itself as the practice of a different, more nuanced, in a certain sense *more radical* philosophical universality.

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PART II

Senses and Spaces



The Atmospheric Sense: Peripheral Perception and the Experience of Space

Juhani Pallasmaa

Why do certain spaces and places make us feel a strong emotional attachment and identification, while others leave us cold, or even frighten us. Why do we feel as insiders and participants in some spaces, whereas others make us experience alienation and “existential outsideness”, to use a notion of Edward Relf (1986, 51)? Isn’t it because the settings of the first type embrace and stimulate us, make us surrender ourselves to them and feel protected and sensually nourished? These spaces, places and environments activate our senses, feelings and imaginations, and strengthen our sense of reality and self, whereas alienating and meaningless settings weaken our sense of self and being.

1 LOSS OF RESONANCE

I hope to provide certain historical, ecological and evolutionary perspectives in order to frame the meaning of mood and atmosphere in an existential context. It is evident that modern and contemporary architectures have turned a blind eye to many of the fundamental sensory and mental issues concerning our relationships with physical settings, both natural and man-

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made. It is also likely that in the western technologized, urbanized and consumerist culture today, our perceptual and experiential relationships with built settings as well as the world at large have fundamentally changed. I wish to argue that through modernity the art of building has gradually focused on the technical, formal and aesthetic concerns of architecture, instead of cultivating its inherent mediating, relational and existential characteristics. Cities and buildings have turned increasingly into operational schemes, economic projects and visual compositions. They have turned into functionalized and visually aestheticized objects. Wider landscapes and milieus have also been neglected as the eyes of the designers have increasingly focused on objects and clear *Gestalt*. The built environments have become solely settings for the judgement and appreciation of the eye.

Resonance with the cosmos and a distinct harmonious tuning were essential qualities of architecture since the Antiquity until the rationalized and instrumentalized construction of the industrial era. The fundamental task of architecture and urban planning was to distinguish the realms of the gods from those of the mortals. Construction aimed at mediating and relational purposes, not independent and autonomous objects and projects. Architecture aimed at creating a harmonic resonance between the microcosm of the human realm and the macrocosm of the Universe. This harmony was sought through proportionality based on small natural numbers following Pythagorean principles of harmony.¹ The Renaissance era also introduced the competing proportional ideal of the Golden Section, which also sought universal harmony. In the modern world, this essential mediating task has been all but forgotten, as architects are designing buildings as unrelated and autonomous works of art. Only a few modern scholars and architects, such as Hans Kayser, R.M. Schindler, Le Corbusier and Aulis Blomstedt, have been interested in the theoretical and philosophical issues of proportional harmony as a means of assuring an experiential tuning of architectural works, similarly to musical tuning. Today, I am not aware of a single school of architecture that would teach principles of harmony. In our Consumerist and utilitarian era, architects have also abandoned the aspiration for harmonic attunement of buildings with the larger contexts, as well as the inner harmonic cohesion of the works themselves. Measures serve efficiency and standardization of the construction processes and manufacturing of the components, not wider metaphysical, philosophical or aesthetic purposes of harmony and attunement.

¹For information on proportionality, see Wittkower (1988), Perez-Gomez (2016), and Pallasmaa (2012, 231–248).

2 ALTERED SENSORY WORLDS

Since the beginning of modernity, architectural theory, education and practice have been concerned primarily with the expressive qualities of individual autonomous works through the articulation of form and space. Unique form and formal expressions have become synonymous with modernity. This orientation has favoured focused vision and the *Gestalt* principles of perception described in psychological literature. Le Corbusier's credo, "Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light", illustrates this prevailing orientation (1959, 31). Architecture is regarded as a purely visual art form and other sensory realms are considered only in special cases of design, such as acoustic concerns in concert halls and auditoria, or the negative impacts of noise. Yet, there is historical evidence that in the early constructions of man, acoustic qualities were more important than visual aspirations; spaces aimed at appropriate resonance between the occupant, especially the shaman, and the space.

Historical studies also show that the earlier sensory realities of everyday life were surprisingly different from today's life dominated by vision. The historian Lucien Febvre describes the earlier oral world as follows: "The sixteenth century did not see first; it heard and smelled, it sniffed the air and caught sounds" (in Jay 1994, 27). Another historian, Robert Mandrou, makes a parallel statement: "The hierarchy [of the senses] was not the same [as in the 20th century] because the eye, which rules today, found itself in third place, behind hearing and touch, and far after them. The eye that organises, classifies and orders was not the favoured organ at a time that preferred hearing" (in Jay 1994, 34–35). The condition of omni-directional and immersive hearing created a world of belonging and participation, whereas vision promotes outsideness, separation, control and solitude. Walter J. Ong, philosopher, points out that especially the inventions of writing and printing turned the oral world into a visual reality: "The shift from oral to written speech was essentially a shift from sound to visual space" (1991, 117); "This is an insistent world of cold, non-human facts" (1991, 122). We can easily imagine the consequent dramatic changes in lived environmental experiences and atmospheres. Also the lived experience of time and duration has changed equally dramatically. "Long novels written today are perhaps a contradiction: the dimension of time has been shattered, we cannot live or think except in fragments of time each of which goes off along its trajectory and immediately disappears. We can rediscover the continuity of time only in the novels of that period when time no longer seemed stopped and did not yet seem to have exploded, a period that lasted no more than a hundred years", Italo Calvino reasons (1979, 8).

3 THE OBSESSION OF THE FOCUSED VISION

Modern studies on vision have been mainly interested in focused vision and static gaze, which however, are exceptional conditions in the lived reality; they are conditions of the research laboratory, not of real life. It is evident that focused vision necessarily implies outsideness in relation to what is seen, while the originary world of sound emphasized simultaneity and relatedness of things and situations. “The eye is the most autonomous of our organs”, as Joseph Brodsky argues (1992, 106). The senses naturally seek to collaborate in order to create a multi-sensory, many-sided and plastic image and a full experience of space and situation. Maurice Merleau-Ponty emphasizes our natural “polyphonic” perception: “My perception is not a sum of visual, tactile, and audible givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being: I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once” (Merleau-Ponty 1948, 48). This description is also a fitting characterization of the atmospheric perception. The essential thing to understand is not how the senses function separately, but how they collaborate and fuse in the real lived multi-sensory perception.

Focused vision enables us to see an object clearly, but it leaves us outsiders in relation to the space enveloping us and its diffuse characteristics, such as atmospheric qualities. The fundamental immaterial experience of being contained or embraced by space necessarily calls for diffuse and peripheral perception in motion. The omni-directional, multi-sensory, embodied and emotive encounter with space and place enables us to grasp our interaction with it and turns us into insiders and participants. It fuses us with “the flesh of the world”, to use a notion of Merleau-Ponty (1964). I suggest that the biased preferencing of focused visual form is the major reason for the weak atmospheric quality and feeling of interiority in much of modern and contemporary architecture. Besides, in the modern era, architects have considered atmospheres, ambiances, feelings and moods as something naïve, romantic and entertaining, instead of regarding these multidimensional and diffuse experiences as necessary constituents of experienced environmental quality. As a matter of fact, atmosphere, mood and attunement have not been part of the established modern architectural theory and discourse until recently.² Modern thinking has been

² Atmospheres have entered a wider architectural discourse only during the last decade regardless of the pioneering scholarly work especially by certain German thinkers.

interested in phenomena that can be consciously and rationally observed, analysed and controlled, but the experience of mood and feeling does not arise from directed and conscious attention, and it seems to be beyond our conscious control. Besides, as non-object, or “quasi-thing”, it escapes definition (Griffero 2013). Mood and emotion seep into our mental constitution in an unnoticed and seemingly unstructured manner, in the same way that we feel weather, unintentionally and in an embodied manner.

4 ATMOSPHERES IN THE ARTS

The atmospheric paintings of J.M.W. Turner and the Impressionists, as well as the immersive works of the Abstract Expressionists evoke strong sensations of interiority, tactility and the touch of the skin. These are works of art that pull us into the phenomenon itself instead of leaving us to merely observe them from outside, and we become participants rather than mere onlookers. The art forms of painting, cinema, literature and theatre, and especially music, have been more aware of the significance of atmosphere, ambience, feeling and mood than architects. Some time ago, I asked an acknowledged Finnish composer (Kalevi Aho) and a fine woman pianist (Minna Pöllänen) about the role of atmospheres in their music, and smiling enigmatically, they both answered: “Music is all atmosphere”. The matter seemed to be so evident to them that they did not bother to explain their view to me. Isn’t this atmospheric magic the reason why music is also used to “furnish” the experiential quality of spaces with specific emotive contents, to evoke specific moods and desires in today’s commercial settings or used in films to initiate and heighten distinct moods? A master novelist’s skill as well as that of the film or theatre director, is to evoke, articulate and sustain specific moods in order to create the dramatic flow and continuum of the narrative. Shouldn’t this also be a skill of the architect?

5 LITERARY ATMOSPHERES

Our capacity for spatial, situational and atmospheric imagination when reading a fine literary work is quite astonishing. As we are reading a great novel, we are, in fact, creating entire buildings, environments and even cities, with their inhabitants and activities in our minds as imaginary projections of the imagination. We can even feel the temperature, illumination and background sounds of the scenes. The processes of literary

imagination are discussed in Elaine Scarry's *Dreaming by the Book*. She explains the vividness of a profound literary text as follows: "In order to achieve the 'vivacity' of the material world, the verbal arts must somehow also imitate its 'persistence' and, more crucially, its quality of 'givenness'. It seems almost certainly the case that it is the 'instructional' character of the verbal arts that fulfils this mimetic requirement for givenness" (2001, 30). Scarry's view suggests that the literary experience is also a full multi-sensory, embodied and existential experience; an atmospheric experience, I would like to say. Bohumil Hrabal, the Czech writer, points out the concreteness of our literary imagination: "When I read, I don't really read: I pop up a beautiful sentence in my mouth and suck it like liqueur until the thought dissolves in me like alcohol, infusing my brain and heart and coursing on through the veins to the root of each blood vessel" (1976, 1).

Architecture also calls for a deepened sense of materiality, gravity and reality, not a momentary air of entertainment or fantasy. The experience of architecture is not a visual picture, as it is lived in "the flesh". "The object of art is not to reproduce reality, but to create a reality of the same intensity", Alberto Giacometti, the sculptor, writes. Another master sculptor, Constantin Brancusi, makes a parallel statement on the crucial value of the sense of life in a work of art: "Art must give suddenly, all at once, the shock of life, the sensation of breathing" (Shanes 1989, 67). Again, the "shock of life" is an embracing atmospheric quality, not a one-dimensional image or quality.

6 SENSING ENTITIES

Modernism has favoured an elementarist view, and entities are assumed to arise additively from elementary units and percepts. However, when we study critically our perceptions and experiences, we seem to be perceiving essences of complex multi-sensory entities, such as the characteristics of spaces, places, landscapes and urban settings at once in an instant. These perceptions take place even quicker than we become conscious of any details, or even our own active attention. We gaze intentionally at visual objects and events, whereas atmospheres come to us omni-directionally, similarly to acoustic and olfactory sensations. "I enter a building, see a room, and—in a fraction of a second—have this feeling about it", Peter Zumthor confesses (2006, 13). We sense the overall mood, tuning, feeling, ambience and atmosphere of a setting before we have become conscious of it or have identified any of its constituent features. Also in the

process of design, atmospheric qualities arise unconsciously in an embodied, haptic and emotional manner in the designer's imagination rather than through conscious retinal intentions or cerebral processing. In the architectural design process the imagined image is felt through the body and it approaches the experience of the real physical thing. Only in the very early conceptual phase sketches may be seen in a purely visual manner as images on paper, but gradually the developing entity obtains spatial and material reality and a sense of life and atmosphere of its own. This vague embodied feeling guides the design as much as any intellectual or visual aesthetic aspirations. Instead of being lines or a figure on paper, the project begins its imagined material existence in the flesh. The conceived project begins to have its existence as body images of the maker. The coherent experiential entity is evoked by one's sense of existence and body more than conscious and deliberately focused visual intentions. The designer needs to focus on visual characteristics again in the phase of making working drawings and details.

7 EXPERIENCING ATMOSPHERES

John Dewey, the visionary American philosopher, who already eight decades ago grasped the immediate, embodied, emotive and subconscious essence of experience, articulates the nature of the existential encounter followingly: "The total overwhelming impression comes first, perhaps in a seizure by a sudden glory of the landscape or by the effect upon us of entrance into a cathedral when dim light, incense, stained glass and majestic proportions fuse in one indistinguishable whole. We say with truth that a painting strikes us. There is an impact that precedes all definite recognition of what it is about" (Dewey 1934, 24).

Atmosphere is related with the notion of the spirit of place, *Genius Loci*, as well as our empathic and affective capacities. The character of a place is a multi-sensory and unfocused quality, not merely a visual character. In the same way that music can charge a spatial or social situation with a particular mood, the ambience of a landscape, townscape and an interior space can project similar integrating and encompassing feelings. Emotional reactions usually arise vaguely, without any distinct focused object, or identifiable cause. Love, happiness and hate, for instance, are not objects; they are relationships, moods and states of mind. Similarly, we may never intellectually "understand" a work of art, but it can convey an ineffable influence throughout our lives. I have had tens of times the privilege of visiting the

legendary modernist residence of Villa Mairea by Alvar Aalto of 1938–1939 in Noormarkku, Finland, but every time I approach the building, it appears as fresh and inviting as if I would be seeing it the first time. The house feels like it would take me in its friendly but noble embrace.

8 ENTITIES BEFORE DETAILS

Contrary to accepted beliefs, we grasp entities before details, singularities before their components, multi-sensory syntheses before individual sensory features and emotive or existential meanings before intellectual explanations. We sense embodied and existential meanings outside of our conscious cognitive channels directly in the life situations. “Understanding is not a quality coming to human reality from the outside; it is its characteristic way of existing”, Jean-Paul Sartre argues (1939, 9). This exemplifies embodied and tacit wisdom. Yet, these processes are in evident conflict with the established perceptual assumptions, as well as the unquestioned priority given to formal and focused vision, and cognitive understanding. Since the Greek philosophers, focused vision has been regarded synonymous to knowledge and truth, “the eye of truth” (Le Corbusier in Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow 1993, 76). Today, neuroscience lends support to the view that we experience entities before elements, and we grasp lived meanings without conceptual or verbal signification. The atmospheric “sense” is clearly an evolutionary priority and a consequence of the activities of our right brain hemisphere (McGilchrist 2009, p. 40). “We perceive atmospheres through our emotional sensibility—a form of perception that works incredibly quickly, and which we humans evidently need to help us survive”, Peter Zumthor argues (2006, 13).

Like Zumthor, I believe that we have developed our capacities of judging entities at the edge of our awareness through the evolutionary process. This point is also made by Iain McGilchrist, the therapist-philosopher, and he also assigns the capacity to grasp entities to the right brain hemisphere. “According to the right hemisphere, understanding is derived from the whole, since it is only in the light of the whole that one can truly understand the nature of the parts” (2009, 142). It has obviously been advantageous to grasp the meaning of situations and settings in an instant in terms of their existential and survival qualities. As other animals in various degrees, we have developed two independent but complementary systems of perceiving; one mode of precise focused perception and the second of diffuse and unfocused peripheral scanning (McGilchrist 2009, 102).

Today's science confirms the assumption that we have two systems of perception, conscious and unconscious, and the first system is activated 20–30 milliseconds before the latter. In accordance with scholars, such as the Viennese artist and scholar, Anton Ehrenzweig, unconscious scanning is also our creative mode of perception (1967).

9 DIFFUSE PERCEPTION AND EMOTIONS

Precision needs to be suppressed for the purpose of grasping large entities. Jacques Hadamard, the mathematician, suggests that even in mathematics, the ultimate decision must be left to the unconsciousness, as a clear visualization of problems is usually impossible. Hadamard states categorically that it is mandatory “to cloud one’s consciousness in order to make the right judgement” (Ehrenzweig 1967, 59). Iain McGilchrist relates this divided attention with the differentiation of our two brain hemispheres. It has obviously been biologically advantageous to be able to make precise and focused perception and general, vague peripheral observations simultaneously, but this would be impossible within a single system of perception (2015). Focused vision detaches itself from contextual perceptions, whereas atmospheric observation fuses and unites sensations through the syntheticizing sense of being and self. The omni-directional senses of hearing, hapticity and smell complete the visual sensations into a full existential experience relating us fully with the world. The experience of atmosphere or mood is dominantly an emotive, pre-reflective mode of perception and experience.

One of the obvious reasons why peripheric perceptions have been undervalued, or totally neglected, is that we have not acknowledged that emotions evaluate, articulate and structure our relations with the world. Emotions have been regarded as unconscious secondary reactions, instead of possessing intentionality and factual value. Yet, emotions arise from primal levels of consciousness and, significantly, the first wave of neural signals is always directed to unconscious systems. “There is no cognition without emotion [...] emotions are not second-rate cognitions; rather they are affective patterns of our encounter with our world, by which we take the meaning of things at a primordial level”, the philosopher Mark Johnson argues (2007, 9). There is strong evidence that the unconscious system of perception has a higher existential priority than the conscious one (Ehrenzweig, 284). The potential superiority of the unconscious processes in comparison with consciousness is revealed dramatically by the

theoretical calculation based on neurological facts, that the information processing capacity of our entire nervous system is estimated to be 10^{15} times the capacity of our conscious system (Bergström 1979, 77–78).

10 THE NATURE OF VISION

The nature of vision itself has been grossly misunderstood as something automatic, objective and precise. Research has revealed that the process of vision is a fragmented and discontinuous mosaic that constantly fuses perceptions with memory and imagination. A visual image itself is composed of separate percepts of colour, form and movement, received at the temporal distance of 20–30 milliseconds from each other. Besides, our focused vision sees what we have learned to see and what we want to see, whereas the peripheral system of perception is capable of identifying what is genuinely new. Mood tunes us emotively with the qualities of our environment, and as a consequence, we do not need to continuously and consciously monitor its overwhelming medley of information and details.

We are not related with our environments only through the five Aristotelian senses, as Steinerian philosophy categorizes twelve senses, and *The Sixth Sense Reader* (Howes 2011, 23–24), lists over thirty systems of sensing through which we are related with the world. I suggest that the atmospheric sense could also be named a sense, and it is likely to be existentially the most important one of our senses. Simply, we do not stop at our skin, as we extend our bodily self by means of our senses and our technological and constructed extensions. The electromagnetic waves of the human heart can now be measured five metres away, but in principle, these waves extend to infinity. Thus, we unknowingly touch and inhabit the entire Universe.

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Atmosphere, Place, and Phenomenology: Depictions of London Place Settings in Three Writings by British-African Novelist Doris Lessing

David Seamon

For describing and understanding atmospheres, phenomenology is one of the most helpful conceptual and methodological approaches. Most broadly, phenomenology examines human experience, particularly its less obvious, unnoticed, taken-for-granted strata, of which atmospheres are an integral part because they are difficult to locate precisely either as a lived presence or as a rendered description. In its full acceptance of all aspects of human experience, including the less readily and tangibly present, phenomenology provides a grounded, workable means for identifying and explicating atmospheres.¹

In this chapter, I focus on a phenomenology of atmosphere as related to place. By “atmosphere,” I refer to a diffuse ineffability that regularly

¹Useful introductions to phenomenology include Finlay (2011), Moran (2000), van Manen (2014).

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attaches itself to particular things, situations, spaces, and environments—what philosopher Gernot Böhme (2014, 8) describes as a kind of “spatially extended feeling,” and philosopher Tonino Griffero (2010, 36) characterizes as the “emotional quality of a given ‘lived space’.” By “place,” I refer to any environmental locus gathering experiences, actions, events, and meanings spatially and temporally (Seamon 2018, 2). By this definition, places range from a favorite sitting place or room to a building, neighborhood, town, city, or region. Following phenomenologists of place Edward Casey (2009) and Jeff Malpas (2018), I assume that place and place experience are an integral part of human life. “Place,” writes Casey (2009, 15–16), “belongs to the very concept of existence. To be is to be bounded by place, limited by it [...] Place-being is part of an entity’s own-being.”

In considering the lived relationship between atmosphere and place, I draw on three works by British-African novelist Doris Lessing (1919–2013), who regularly in her writing offers lucid accounts of place atmospheres in London, the city she emigrated to from Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) shortly after World War II.² Before, I examine specific place atmospheres in Lessing’s writings, I overview the lived relationship between place, atmosphere, and sense of place.

1 PLACE, ATMOSPHERE, AND SENSE OF PLACE

In relation to place, atmosphere refers to the invisible character that makes an environment singular and confers on that environment a specific presence and ambience (Borch 2014; Böhme et al. 2014; Griffero 2010, 2017). Böhme (2014, 96, 56), for example, links atmosphere to place when he writes of “spaces with a mood” and “that total impression that is regarded as characteristic” of a place. Similarly, architectural theorist Juhani Pallasmaa (2014, 20) defines atmosphere as “the overarching perceptual, sensory, and emotive impression of a space, setting, or social situation.” Böhme and Pallasmaa’s descriptions of atmosphere point toward its remarkably complex, experiential constitution. Atmospheres are nebulous, elusive, mutable, and, therefore, never fully graspable or describable. They cannot be identified by vision alone but incorporate a wide range of lived qualities that include sound, smell, tactility, emotional vibrations, and an active, indeterminant immanence of things, spaces, and environmental qualities.

²For discussions of Lessing’s oeuvre, see Brazil et al. (2018), Raschke et al. (2010). On Lessing’s portrayal of London in her writings, see Arias (2005), Seamon (1981, 1993), Sizemore (1989).

In many ways, place atmospheres are related to “sense of place,” “spirit of place,” or *genius loci*—the unique ambience and character of a place, for example, the “London-ness” of London or the “Tuscan-ness” of Tuscany (Relph 1976, 63–78). As with discussions of atmosphere, explications of *genius loci* regularly focus on an ineffable environmental presence impossible to locate or describe precisely or completely. For example, British novelist Lawrence Durrell (1971, 157) characterized *genius loci* as “the invisible constant in a place,” and Norwegian architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980, 10) contended that *genius loci* gives “life” to places. American writer Henry Miller spotlighted the indescribable atmospheric core of place experience when he explained his reaction to a fellow American who asked the writer why he lived in Paris: “It was useless to answer him in words. I suggested instead that we take a stroll through the streets” (cited in Sciolino 2016, 47).

2 PLACE ATMOSPHERES IN LESSING’S *FOUR-GATED CITY*

As one procedural means for explicating qualities of place atmospheres more exactly, I examine several descriptions from Doris Lessing’s writings, beginning with her 1969 novel, *The Four-Gated City* (henceforth *City*), which depicts the emigrant experience of a young Southern Rhodesian woman named Martha Quest, who arrives in battle-scarred London immediately after World War II (Lessing 1969). A major theme of *City* is the difficult process by which newcomers find their place and make a home in a strange and unfamiliar environment (Seamon 1981). Martha has come to London, partly to find out who she is and, at least for a time, to be someone different from the person she was in Southern Rhodesia.

As one narrative means for highlighting the potential worlds in which Martha might find her place in London, Lessing draws on the contrasting atmospheres of several place settings that Martha encounters in her first few months in the city. The first of these place settings is a small café located in London’s working-class South Bank neighborhood and run by elderly couple Jimmy and Iris. When Martha first takes lodging above this small café shortly after arriving in London, she sees this place as nothing more than one of “millions of little shops, each one the ground floor of an old house” (Lessing 1969, 8). As she works part-time behind the counter to pay for her lodging, however, Martha become aware of its unique, imposing atmosphere:

It was jolly in the café; people coming in knew each other, knew Iris and Jimmy. They had shared, many of them, their childhood, their lives. They had shared, most of them, the war. And they had opened their hearts to her [...]. What people actually said in that café was the least of what they were able to convey. (Lessing 1969, 11–12)

In the several weeks she works in the café, Martha comes to see that its atmosphere involves a daily rhythm that begins early in the morning at five, when Iris opens the café unofficially to lorry drivers who live in a nearby boardinghouse whose landlady won't feed them so early. Between five and eight, the café is "a scene of bustling, steaming intimacy" (Lessing 1969, 75). As Martha sits in the café one morning, ready to begin employment in another part of London, she registers the atmosphere of this place: "The air of the small steam box which was the café vibrated with interest, tact, sympathy—friendship, in short [...]" (Lessing 1969, 4). As she leaves the café for the last time, she looks through the "dim muslin" that screens the café windows and notes how the interpersonal exuberance within sheds "warmth onto the pavement" (Lessing 1969, 77).

In contrast to the vibrant, supportive atmosphere of Jimmy and Iris's café is the dull, conforming ambience of Baxter's, a traditional London restaurant to which lawyer and acquaintance Henry Matheson invites Martha to inquire about her working for his law firm. Martha walks to the restaurant in a heavy rain and enters with wet hair and damp coat, greeted by a man "in shabby dinner clothes and sleeked-down dandruffy hair [...], already disapproving" (Lessing 1969, 24). The place is "muted, dingy, rather dark" with "dull-flowering wallpaper." None of the furnishings have "any sort of charm or beauty" but are chosen for the ready way they "melt into this scene." As Martha studies the restaurant more carefully, she realizes that "things were expensive" and "money had been spent [...]" to keep the restaurant exactly as it had always been: in an expensive shabbiness, dowdiness [...]. But Henry didn't care, he was at home cozy with his kind" (Lessing 1969, 25). Later, a female acquaintance takes Martha to lunch at a restaurant called Fanny's, which is a less elegant version of Baxter's, with the same kind of food, "but plainer, without sauces, and much cheaper." The restaurant is decorated with "dull floral curtains and wall paper of a pinkish floral design" (Lessing 1969, 81). Martha senses intuitively how both restaurants relate to a specific social-class standard of which she is uncertain she wishes to be a part: "[S]omewhere behind both was a country house, or a large farmhouse: the country, at any rate, with

centuries of a certain kind of taste behind it. If Fanny's and Baxter's had to do without paint or new curtains for fifty years, they would still present themselves to the world with impermeable self-esteem" (Lessing 1969, 81).

Eventually, Martha finds a home in London when she goes to work as a live-in secretary for Mark Coldridge, a part-time novelist and prosperous entrepreneur living in a commodious Georgian townhouse in upper-middle-class Bloomsbury, an elite neighborhood that, even after the recent war, "had the unity of its original design: houses, terraces, grassy squares full of old trees" (Lessing 1969, 88). Here, Martha notes, "one thought of the beauty of London" rather than its tattered post-war ugliness. Martha is taken to Mark's house by left-wing Labor-Party organizer Phoebe Coldridge, Mark's former sister-in-law and a sister of one of Martha's Southern Rhodesian friends. Lessing describes Martha's first encounter with Mark's house, which, from the front door, appears claimed by the trees and plantings of the square near which it is located. Standing in the house's entry hall, Martha realized that, for the first time in her life, "she was in a setting where, if she chose to stay, there would be no doubt at all of how she ought to behave, to dress. She had always resisted such a setting, or the thought of it. If she took this job, then it must be for a very short time. She felt attacked by the house—claimed" (Lessing 1969, 88–89).

At first, Mark mistakenly assumes that Martha is the young female applicant he does not wish to hire because of her political connections with Phoebe. He directs Martha toward an off-hall parlor that is a "long, subdued, beautiful room which looked as if no one had been in it for months" and feels like a "no-man's land or defensive area" (Lessing 1969, 90). Unsettled by the awkward, unused quality of this room, Martha prepares to decline the position and leave. "No. Wait," Mark exclaims, suddenly realizing that she is not Phoebe's young protégé and making it clear to Martha that he had chosen the discommodious room "to put off, or intimidate" this other female applicant. He studies Martha, and she studies him: "He was looking at her more closely. She stood, to be inspected; examining him. But all she felt was: Here are claims. Not only from him [...] but from the house, the furniture—even this area in London" (Lessing 1969, 90). Mark takes Martha upstairs to a small first-floor room full of papers, books, and "comfortable clutter." The informal surroundings make it easier for Martha to be at ease. After some deliberation, she accepts his employment offer. As she goes to bed her first night in her new London home, she closes her eyes "on a room whose presence was so

strong, so confident, that she was saying as she went to sleep: I'll stay for just a short time. A couple of months [...]" (Lessing 1969, 104).

Ultimately, Martha remains as Mark's employee for much of her adult life, and the major portion of *City* depicts the shifting fortunes of the Coldridge house and family as largely seen through Martha's eyes. Several years after her first meeting with Mark and now responsible for and attached to the life and residents of the house, Martha walks upstairs and gives attention to the various rooms and their contrasting atmospheres marked by their contrasting occupants—Mark; Francis, Mark's son; and Paul, Mark's nephew and a neurotic adolescent whose mother committed suicide and whose father, a nuclear scientist and Mark's brother, fled to the Soviet Union as a Russian spy:

She went up the stairs, through a house separated with the people who inhabited it, into areas or climates, each with its own feel, or sense of individuality: Mark's rooms, unmistakable, even with one's eyes shut, even with sound shut off, because of their atmosphere of something closed in, enduring, stubborn; Francis's room which was kept as it had been for years—a boy's room, with cricket bats and butterflies in cases [...]; then Paul's area—but even the flight of stairs that approached Paul's floor emanated electric storm, for here not even silence, or sleep, could be the quiet of peace. Even from the street, raising one's eyes, one expected that the apertures of the third floor would shoot out a baleful blue ray, was surprised to see a pair of neat and pretty windows, in the pattern of windows that opened the tall narrow house to the light. (Lessing 1969, 352)

I choose these narrative examples from *City* because each illustrates the powerful ways in which both effable and ineffable environmental qualities sustain a unique sense of place—the jovial robustness of the café; the intentional blandness of the two restaurants; the imposing solidity of the Coldridge house; the contrasting ambiances of its upstairs rooms as radiated by their occupants' disparate personalities. All these examples involve specific environmental settings evoking dissimilar atmospheric presences that Lessing deftly pinpoints by the phrase “climates, each with its own feel” and “individuality.” In turn, she specifies the “feel” and “individuality” of these “climates” by more exact sensuous and emotional descriptors such as “jolly,” “intimate,” “shabby,” “dull,” “comfortable,” “enduring,” “stubborn,” “electric,” and “baleful.” At least partly, these less perceptible qualities arise via features of the material and fabricated environment but, at the same time, Martha senses and feels these settings in her own unique

way because of her personality, her personal and cultural history, and her acute corporeal, emotional, and intellectual sensibilities. Lessing's descriptions illustrate how place atmosphere is an "in-between" phenomenon grounded in lived qualities of both experiencer and environment experienced. As Griffero (2017, xiv–xv) explains, "atmospheres exist 'between' the object (or rather, the environmental *qualita*) and the subject (or rather, the felt-body)."

3 THE "LONDON-NESS" OF LONDON

In other writings, Lessing offers narrative descriptions of London as a place unto itself. These accounts illustrate how one's place sensibilities shift over time and indicate that, with experience, practice, and changing life events, one may better empathize with a specific place and cultivate a self-understanding that is more comprehensive, accurate, and attuned to that place. In Lessing's writings, this shift in self-understanding is highlighted in *City* and in her 1960s book *In Pursuit of the English*, a journalistic account of her first year in London (Lessing 1960; henceforth *Pursuit*).

When Lessing first arrives in England in 1949, she is thirty years old and a struggling writer with a three-year-old son. She has emigrated because she wants to and "can't remember a time when I didn't want to come to England" (Lessing 1960, 12). Encountering this strange new place as a newcomer, however, she dislikes England at first and questions her decision to leave her homeland: "The White Cliffs of Dover depressed me. They were too small. The Isle of Dogs discouraged me. The Thames looked dirty. I had better confess that for the whole of the first year, London seemed to me to be a city of such appalling ugliness that I wanted only to leave" (1960, 12). In time, both Lessing and Martha Quest come to appreciate London for its "London-ness," and an important guide for this progressive understanding is London "insiders" like café proprietor Iris, who introduce Martha to less visible qualities of the city and help her to become a London "insider" herself. Iris has an exhaustive, generational knowledge of her local South Bank neighborhood, and she initiates Martha in this knowledge as they regularly walk the neighborhood together. When she accompanies Iris through the bomb-damaged South Bank streets that are her home, Martha sees "in a double vision, as if she were two people: herself and Iris, one eye stating and denying, warding off the total hideousness of the whole area, the other, knowing it in love" (Lessing 1960, 10).

In time, both Lessing and Martha Quest come to admire London and appreciate its uniqueness as a remarkable urban place. Perhaps the most compelling description of this affectionate way of seeing is Lessing's account of standing on the National Gallery steps and looking out at Trafalgar Square, to which she has been taken by her friend, Miss Privet, another London insider:

It was a wet evening, with a soft glistening light falling through a low golden sky. Dusk was gathering along walls, behind pillars and balustrades. The starlings squealed overhead. The buildings along Pall Mall seemed to float, reflecting soft blues and greens on to a wet and shining pavement. The fat buses, their scarlet softened, their hardness dissolved in mist, came rolling gently along beneath us, disembarking a race of creatures clad in light, with burnished hair and glittering clothes. It was a city of light I stood in, a city of bright phantoms. But Miss Privet was not one to harbour her pleasures beyond reasonable expectations. For ten minutes I was allowed to stand there, while the light changed and the thin clouds overhead sifted a soft, drenching golden atmosphere. Then she said, "Now we must go. It'll be dead in a minute, just streets." (Lessing 1960, 229–30)

As with the earlier atmospheric descriptions relating to interior place settings, one recognizes in these South Bank and Trafalgar depictions how the experience of place atmosphere can shift over time and how environmental and human qualities contribute significantly to place atmosphere. Particularly with the help of London insiders, Lessing and Martha Quest gradually gain a deeper, more inclusive engagement with the city and see it more *as it is in itself* rather than as they imagine, expect, or demand it to be. In this sense, they empathize with London in its "London-ness" and discern atmospheric qualities that are accurately a part of London itself rather than a less accurate projection distorted by personal preconceptions, presumptions, or frustrations.

Because her medium is writing, Lessing can only describe her immersive experience of Trafalgar Square in words that mostly incorporate environmental elements and sensuous and affective qualities. Underlying these depictable features, however, is the *ineffable wholeness of place as atmosphere*. As we as readers envision Lessing's experience imaginatively and vicariously, we are transported to the invisible dimension of Trafalgar Square's presence even if we have never visited this place ourselves. Lessing's account illustrates how a unique place atmosphere is grounded in *geographicality*—the term that French historian Eric Dardel (1952)

used to identify the specific lived qualities of a place evoked by geographical qualities like weather, climate, topography, vegetation, water features, human-made elements, and the like (Relph 1985, 21). These geographical qualities are the environmental foundation of a particular place, but atmosphere is its integrated presence via *place-as-place* (Relph 1985, 25–26; Seamon 2018, 25–26).

4 THE LIVED COMPLEXITY OF PLACE ATMOSPHERE

One of Lessing's most encompassing illustrations of the lived complexity of place atmospheres is her short story, "Dialogue," a title meant to be ironic, since the unnamed narrator experiences a personal struggle as to how she is to encounter and understand the world in which she finds herself (Lessing 1978). Is she to experience the world sensuously and emotionally, or is she to know it only intellectually and secondhand? Is the lived core of human being heartfelt communality or cerebral detachment? As the story opens, the narrator stands on a London street corner watching an elderly woman buying potatoes from a vendor who is part of a bustling street market. Nearby, a music store broadcasts opera music onto the sidewalk, where two disheveled teenage boys partake in "earnest conversation" (Lessing, 1978, 367). A bus stops to discharge passengers, one of whom passes and says, "What's the joke?" He winks, and the narrator realizes she is smiling, filled with a sense of well-being bolstered by the communal liveliness of the familiar street:

This irrepressible good nature of the flesh, felt in the movement of her blood like a greeting to pavements, people, a thick drift of a cloud across pale blue sky [...]. A bookshop had a tray of dingy books outside it, and she rested her hand on their limp backs and loved them. Instantly, she looked at the world "love," which her palm, feeling delight at the contact, had chosen [...]. (Lessing 1978, 368–369)

The foil to this sensuous, emotionally grounded awareness of place is the cold, cerebral situation that awaits the narrator when she reaches her final destination: former lover Bill's apartment in a ten-story high-rise that hovers over the vibrant street scene. This building is "narrow and glass-eyed," many floors higher than the "small shallow litter of buildings" below, probably soon to be demolished because they are not "economical" (Lessing 1978, 367). The high-rise building *is* economical, replacing on

its corner lot, “three small houses, two laundries, and a grocer’s” (Lessing, 1978, 367). For over an hour, the narrator lingers at the foot of the tall building, fortifying her sense of self by imbibing the lively street scene. She has promised Bill a visit because he is terminally ill, apartment-bound, and “one of the solitary ones” (Lessing 1978, 371). She rides the elevator to the top floor, rings Bill’s door, which he opens and directs her into the living room. She takes her usual place on a long, benchlike settee, covered with a red blanket. He sits in “his expensive chair which looked surgical, being all black leather and chromium” (Lessing 1978, 369). He is challenged by the openness of the room, which is large, high, and with an outer wall that is mostly window. Looking out from this window to the city below is “a release” for the narrator, but the view is “a terror” for Bill, who prefers the dim enclosure of his tiny bedroom, “always darkened by permanently drawn midnight blue curtains, so that the narrow bed with the books stacked up the wall beside it was in a suffocating shadow, emphasized by a small yellow glow from the bed lamp” (Lessing 1978, 369).

The narrator’s dilemma is transitioning between Bill’s solitary, intellectual world above and the convivial, life-filled world below. Why, she asks, does she continue to visit this man who refuses to accept that her love of life is real? Why does she deliberately forsake the “happiness [...] she left in the streets”?

Was it because she believed the pain in this room was more real than the happiness? Because of the courage behind it? She might herself not be able to endure the small dark-curtained room which would force her most secret terrors; but she respected this man who lived on the exposed platform swaying in the clouds (which is how his nerves felt it). (Lessing 1978, 370)

During her visit, she and Bill debate the relative merits of sociability, kindness, and comfort (the narrator’s point of view) versus loneliness, self-interest, and anguish (Bill’s). As they disagree, the narrator closes her eyes and makes herself remember “with her flesh, what she had discarded [...] on the pavement—the pleasure from the touch of faded books, pleasure from the sight of ranked fruit and vegetables [...]. a pulse of vitality, like the beating colours of oranges, lemons and cabbages, gold and green, a dazzle, a vibration in the eyes [...]” (Lessing 1978, 374). Their conversation reaches an impasse, and the narrator leaves but cannot shake the painful perplexity with which Bill’s attenuated, ungenerous world fills her. As

she returns to the street, the exuberant sidewalk life that gave her energy before is now unfamiliar, and “the hazy purple sky that encloses London at night was savage, bitter, and the impulse behind its shifting lights was a source of pain.” Everything seems hostile and there is “a flat black-and-white two-dimensional jagged look to things” as “the tall building, like a black tower, stood over her, kept pace with her” (Lessing 1978, 377).

By chance, her hand pulls a leaf from a hedge, and its piquant aroma renews her sense of life: “A faint, pungent smell came to her nostrils. She understood it was the smell of the leaf which [...] seemed to explode with a vivid odour into the sense of her brain so that she understood the essence of the leaf and through it the scene she stood in” (Lessing 1978, 377). Though in the background she still senses the dark tower, “immensely high, narrow, terrible,” she also feels the sustaining energy of the street:

She stood fingering the leaf, while life came back. The pulses were beating again. A warmth came up through her soles. The sky’s purplish orange was for effect, for the sake of self-consciously exuberant theatricality, a gift to the people living under it. An elderly woman passed, mysterious and extraordinary in the half-light, and smiled at her. She was saved from deadness, she was herself again. She walked slowly on, well-being moving in her, making a silent greeting to the people passing her. (Lessing 1978, 377–378)

5 ENVIRONMENTAL ENSEMBLE, PEOPLE-IN-PLACE, AND COMMON PRESENCE

I end with Lessing’s “Dialogue” because this short story points to the complex lived ways in which environment, people, and atmosphere intertwine via place and place encounter. Elsewhere (Seamon 2018), I have argued that place and place experience can be understood via the relationships among three components: *environmental ensemble*, *people-in-place*, and *common presence*. The *environmental ensemble* refers to the material and environmental qualities of place, both natural and human-made, and is equivalent to Dardel’s geographicality mentioned earlier. Although any specific place’s environmental ensemble is singular, it is an essential contributor to atmosphere because it is the material ground for place experiences and place events. In turn, *people-in-place* relates to the human worlds associated with a particular environmental ensemble and includes the human experiences, actions, meanings, and situations integral to the place, whether habitual and usual or reflectively planned and out of the ordinary.

Via people-in-place, the atmosphere of place is encountered and known, though as Griffero (2010, 2017) points out, this awareness may be ignored, misread, distrusted, taken-for-granted, hidden from one's conscious awareness, or lost sight of over time.

Overarching both environmental ensemble and people-and-place is the less visible component of *common presence*, which refers to the material and lived "togetherness" of a place impelled by both its physical and human qualities. The common presence of a place has bearing on its degree of "life" and environmental wholeness (Alexander 2002–2005). I suggest that the relative "togetherness" of entities in space buoys an environmental "common presence" that emerges as a sensible quality shared by the entities (including human beings) that are a part of that space (Seamon 2018, 88). Common presence relates to the ways that the degree of spatial togetherness of a place, engendered through both its environmental and human components, contributes to its relative character and singularity, including less comprehensible and accessible aspects like atmosphere and sense of place.

In Doris Lessing's place descriptions, one sees how each of these three place components plays a role in place atmosphere. On the one hand, there are physical and spatial qualities of the environmental ensemble that set the material ground for the particular atmosphere: the café space, the restaurants and their furnishings, the Coldridge house, the Trafalgar setting, the geographical fabric of London. On the other hand, there is a specific person-in-place—Martha Quest, Doris Lessing, or the unnamed narrator—who "tunes into" these place settings and makes contact with less tangible qualities, sensibilities, and feelings that, in sum, mark place atmosphere. In turn, this place atmosphere is one lived expression of common presence as it gathers up and integrates human and environmental elements spatially. In *City*, Lessing refers obliquely to this gathering, indwelling quality of common presence when she writes that "People in any sort of communion, link, connection, make up a whole" (Lessing 1969, 221). It is the degree of wholeness, shaping and being shaped by the spatial "togetherness" of the specific constellation of environmental ensemble and people-in-place, that defines the common presence of place (Seamon 2018, 90). An integral aspect of this common presence is the range of atmospheres supporting and being supported by the particular place.

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A Jungly Feeling: The Atmospheric Design of Zoos

Michael Hauskeller and Tom Rice

1 DESIGNING SPACES AND ATMOSPHERES

“In general”, one of us (MH) wrote a quarter of a century ago, “atmosphere is that part of the object of perception that is not object but meaning. How the world is for us, that is, what sort of relation we have to it in any given moment and how we feel in it, we experience not representationally, but atmospherically” (Hauskeller 1995, 101). Atmospheres articulate the relation between the perceiver and the perceived (which is part of the perceiver’s world).

When we design spaces, we also, whether or not that is our intention, design atmospheres.¹ Atmospheres are, after all, everywhere that people are.

¹Griffero defines atmospheres as “spatialised feelings: that is to say, they are the specific emotional quality of a given ‘lived space’” (2010, 36). This does not mean that feelings exist first in a spaceless way, so that they can then be spatialised or not, and if they are, they are atmospheres. *All* lived spaces have an emotional quality, and there are no feelings that are not, in some way or another, “spatialised”.

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Wherever people are, there cannot *not* be an atmosphere for them. We may not always be self-reflectively aware of it, but wherever we go we find ourselves emotionally affected by our environment, not as a private, mental reaction caused by some of its physical features, but as a property of the space we inhabit. Normally, there is no perceived gap between cause and effect. In our experience, it is the world out there that is emotionally tinted: we just go with the flow and let ourselves become attuned to the affective disposition of the environment. Atmospheres are objective moods, not in the sense that they exist independently of a perceiving subject, but in the sense that they are an integral, inseparable aspect of what is perceived.² Moods, in turn, are evaluative states. No perceived object is ever completely value-neutral, because everything we perceive is part of our world, as we are part of its world, and everything that is part of our world and whose world we are part of, can be good or bad for us. It can be useful or harmful, can support our survival and our well-being, or hurt and destroy us. It can make our life better or worse, more or less worth living. We are existentially dependent on our environment, which, precisely for this reason, always poses an existential threat to us. We cannot afford to ignore the state of the world around us. The autonomous Cartesian or Kantian intelligible self is nothing but a comforting fiction. For the likes of us, there is only embodied and extended being. *Where* we are is an essential part of *what* we are. Because of that, we perceive the world atmospherically.

Atmospheres indicate a presence. Every presence is ipso facto the presence of a power. The entirely powerless is never present. It does not exist for us. Perceiving the world atmospherically, we acknowledge our own dependency and the existence of other powers around us. Atmospheres provide us with information about (or at any rate a rough indication of)

²Hermann Schmitz once declared that “emotions are not more subjective than country roads, but only less fixable” (1969, 87). He is right, of course, but that does not mean that atmospheres are objective, just as country roads are. That is because one could just as well turn Schmitz’s claim around and say, with equal justification, that country roads are not more objective than atmospheres, namely because “country roads” do not exist as such, but only for us. The distinction between subjective and objective is a false dichotomy. Nothing is only objective, or only subjective. The fundamental datum is our finding ourselves in a world. The subjective and the objective indicate opposite poles of one undivided experience. Things are more or less subjective, more or less objective, and the objective is actually the intersubjective (i.e. we call “objective” what we all, or the vast majority of us, perceive in the same way). There is no object without a subject, and no subject without an object.

the presumed nature of those powers, the collective name of which is “reality”.³ Some atmospheres tell us what things are and how they can affect us. All atmospheres tell us that things are real (even if they are not). In that sense, an atmosphere is a felt presence.

Reality matters. In order for us to take an interest in things, they need to be real to us. This does not mean that we need to *think* of them as real. In fact, we may even know that they are *not* real and still take an interest as long as they *feel* real to us. Creating an atmosphere is first and foremost a way to make things feel real. Yet if atmospheres are everywhere that people are, it would appear that there is no need to create them in order to provide people with a sense of reality. We all have a sense of reality already. However, not all things are equally real to us at all times. By creating atmospheres around certain objects or ideas, we focus people’s attention on them, increase their dominance in our phenomenological space, and make them more real to us than they might otherwise be. Yet things can also get too real. What the designer of atmospheric spaces needs to do is keep the right balance between the real-enough and the not-too-real.

2 ATMOSPHERIC SOUNDSCAPES IN ZOOS

The atmospheric design of zoos provides a good example of the need to balance the real-enough and the not-too-real. A modern zoo has many functions. It assembles and displays other-than-human animals (henceforth “animals”) in order to entertain and also to educate (though zoos also increasingly present themselves as organisations for conservation activities). The goals of entertainment and education are supported by the deliberate creation of atmospheres. This is necessary to attract visitors to the zoo and to build and maintain a reputation for providing interesting and exciting attractions. In order to stay competitive, they must create particular kinds of atmosphere, distinctive moods or feelings, which can be quite varied, ranging from cheerful excitement and a sense of adventure to

³Though for some, that name may be God. According to the Dutch philosopher of religion Gerardus van der Leeuw (1933, 140), the word God is first and foremost “the name for an experience of power”. The sense of presence seems to be a main source of religious feeling, as also Williams James suggested in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*: “It is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call ‘something there’, more deep and more general than any of the special and particular ‘senses’ by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed” (James 1902, 59). Cf. also Otto (1917).

respect and even awe (for instance through proximity to rare, precious, exotic and/or powerful animals). As zoos increasingly present themselves as places for conservation and education, they might also be sites for the production or reflection of Anthropocene anxieties (Whitehouse 2015), seeking to galvanise environmentally sensitive and responsible behaviours among zoo visitors through making them atmospherically cognisant and appreciative of what has been or might be lost. It is not always either possible or necessary, however, for a zoo to create a particular atmosphere that is clearly identifiable in terms of the moods that it conveys. Often it will be enough to create a space that is atmospheric in a more general sense. Not every atmosphere is an emotionally *specific* atmosphere (Rauh 2012). A specific atmosphere is an *enhanced presence* of a given object or complex idea, so that the mood it evokes is particular to that object or idea, very much like a proper name that marks out one thing (a person or a place) and one thing only.

Sounds can play an important part in the creation of atmosphere, though often they stay in the background, and it is in this sub- or semiconscious background that the atmosphere of a place is created. The second author of this chapter (TR) has a particular research interest in sound (see Rice 2013, 2016), and during a number of visits to zoos with his young children during 2017, he was struck by the way these places became sonically atmospheric in both specific and non-specific ways. Having passed through the entrance of one zoo, he emerged into an open space where he was conscious of the co-presence of a variety of sounds: the murmur of adult human voices, excited cries and shrieks from children, calls from a nearby enclosure featuring exotic birds, the crackle of a walkie talkie worn by a member of staff, the whoosh of passing traffic and a short burst of a car alarm on a nearby road. There were no doubt other sonic presences too, which contributed to the sonic environment (and hence to the perceived atmosphere) but which were not prominent enough for him to readily distinguish and identify. Perhaps because of the way these sounds issued from what, for him, was an unusual assemblage of sources with a wide range of associations, his own experience of this location was of a kind of atmospheric uncertainty, which left him unsure as to exactly how to engage with his immediate surroundings, and unsure of what attitude it was intended that he take forward into the zoo experience. At another zoo or “wildlife park”, this time in a rural location, he stopped to listen to what he later learned from a text panel was a lar gibbon (*Hylobates lar*) calling from high up in its enclosure. It was raining, and while he listened,

drops pattered on the fabric of the umbrella he was holding and hissed on the concrete path. The space seemed charged, though in a way that he was unable to define. These places, at least in the lived moment, had an “atmospheric feel”, which is different from saying that they had the feel of a particular atmosphere. When we say that a place “has atmosphere” or “is atmospheric”, then what we are saying is that it engages us affectively in non-specific ways, or in ways we find difficult to describe, whereas if a place produces a particular atmosphere then clearly it engages us affectively in ways we can identify and articulate. During a visit to a Safari Park, TR happened to walk through an area of enclosures just after feeding time when the animals were surprisingly active and vocal. Groups of visitors were responding enthusiastically: gesturing, exclaiming and commenting among themselves. Amidst all this human and non-human animation, it was easy to reach for what seemed fitting adjectives. The atmosphere was lively and energetic. By contrast, at another Wildlife Park, on an unusually cold and rainy day in summer, TR seemed to be one of the only visitors, and very few animals were visible outside. An emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*) in a small paddock pecked at the bottom of a bucket, making a hard thud with each contact and rattling the pellets of food that remained inside. Water dripped from its feathers. The atmosphere seemed heavy and sad. This is not to speak for the emu and its affective state, or to make any value-laden statement about its living conditions. There was not necessarily anything objectively or permanently “heavy and sad” about the emu or the zoo in which it featured. Atmospheres are temporary and transient, they change easily, from one moment to the next. It seems likely, though, that the atmosphere was not what the Wildlife Park had desired to create. Atmospheres are at times elusive, resistant to attempts to design or construct them. They are unstable and can be experienced in unpredictable and unintended ways.

3 AUTHENTICITY

Zoos often use sound with the apparent aim of making exhibits more atmospheric. Many modern zoo exhibits are designed to evoke or give visitors the sense of being immersed in a particular kind of environment or ecosystem, and sound is added to enhance their effect. One exhibit visited by TR, for example, featured an array of nocturnal or crepuscular animals. As well as being dark inside, a track of jungle sounds with tropical birds and insects played for visitors as they moved through the space. In the

viewing area of the humid and pungent pygmy hippo (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) exhibit nearby, TR noticed different jungle sounds issuing from speakers somewhere high up in the enclosure, out of plain sight. What seemed to be important in both these exhibits was that the atmosphere produced a sort of “jungly feeling”. This was not necessarily the same atmosphere one would experience if one were actually in the place where the species of animals on display are found in the wild (and in the case of the first exhibit, there is no location where that same combination of species is found together in the wild). So there is no need for absolute authenticity. In order to make them *feel* authentic, the atmospheres created need not evoke what a place is (really) like, but merely what we *think* or *imagine* it is like. In fact, it is possible that real authenticity may undermine the experience that the zoo wishes to create. The atmosphere evoked should not be too real (as in exactly like the experience of being in a particular place), because the zoo experience is supposed to be a fun day out, while *actually* being in the jungle is probably a lot less fun. So we don’t really want to feel in the zoo as if we were in the jungle. We want to have a surrogate feeling, a jungly feeling perhaps, but not a jungle feeling. We want to feel the wild, but that wild needs to be fit for our consumption.

At one zoo visited by TR, a “crocodile swamp” exhibit (in this case *Crocodylus porosus*) included a recording of crocodiles with accompanying jungle sounds of thunder and some insect and/or frog sounds. This recording (which is likely to be an assemblage of stock sounds, not of recordings of the animals that are actually in the zoo) was evidently used to make the place feel more like a real swamp. The atmosphere created, or that was intended to be created, was a paradigmatic “swamp atmosphere”. Since few visitors have ever been to a real swamp, however, the atmosphere created does not have to resemble the atmosphere that we are likely to experience in a swamp. What it has to resemble instead is the atmosphere that we think a swamp would generate. They are in fact tapping into cultural expectations of what a swamp should sound like, which might have little to do with an accurate representation of actual swamp soundscapes. What is more, visitors do not really *want* to feel exactly as if they were in a swamp surrounded by crocodiles, for obvious reasons. In a real swamp, out in the wild, there is no guarantee that you won’t get eaten. Excitement, then, would quickly give way to fear or alarm.⁴ Zoos don’t

⁴ Naturally that also depends on the exact context of the swamp experience. MH recently went to Louisiana and on that occasion also took a boat tour through the swamps. The main

want their visitors to get afraid or alarmed, or only very slightly and in a very controlled and controllable manner. Many of the visitors are, after all, children. They need to feel safe. But they also want to feel excitement, the kind of excitement that comes from proximity to large, powerful wild animals. The intended atmosphere at the crocodile swamp thus needs to be highly ambivalent: it needs to convey an environment that is both potentially dangerous and entirely safe. For that, a hint of unreality is necessary, which can be introduced through the very artificiality of the created atmosphere's material constituents.

At another zoo visited by TR, hidden speakers are set at intervals in the hedge that you walk past as you approach the zoo entrance. They play out edited compilations of animal sounds, supposedly creating exactly the desired jungly feel, despite the fact, or perhaps precisely because of it, that it would surely be impossible, or very rare, to hear elephants, monkeys and lions together or at least in such proximity. As indicated above, atmosphere is clearly more important than authenticity in the symbolic world of the zoo.⁵ But then zoos are also spaces where animals that would not normally be found close together live side by side. A zoo is a heterotopia in Foucault's sense (Foucault 1986), a place both real and unreal, where things stemming from different life worlds are precariously conjoined. So the sounds do to some extent reflect the same artificial universe as that created by the zoo. At the same time, the atmospheres created through the chosen heterotopian soundscapes are intended to conceal, at least to

attractions were the Mississippi alligators of which plenty can be seen in the water and on the banks. The tour guides offer them marshmallows on a stick to lure them to the boat and make them jump out of the water, thus providing a closer look and a more exciting spectacle for the tourists. Clearly, the alligators were used to that kind of thing and posed no real danger to the people on the boat. Accordingly, there was no cause for fear or alarm. On the other hand, the tour guide's stories and signs with stern warnings to keep one's hands in the boat made sure that the supposed fearsomeness of the alligators was not forgotten. Just as in zoos, there should not be too much fear, but not too little either (cf. Keul 2013, 947). Or in other words, we need to believe that the beast *can* kill us, but also that it *won't*.

⁵ It goes without saying that it is not only zoos where atmosphere has priority over authenticity. Rather, this is now the norm in all public places that also serve commercial interests. Jonathan Sterne, describing and analysing the function of music in the Mall of America (in Bloomington, Minnesota), points out how what he calls the "phantom objectivity of experience" has become a "pervasive social phenomenon". By organising space in commercial settings and, thus, creating a fabricated environment designed to influence people's emotional attitudes and, as a consequence, behaviour, the outside social world is "folded into that which is most inside and private: the substance of affect and experience" (Sterne 1997, 46).

some extent, the actual reality of the place. The zoo that attempts to create a “jungly feeling” hides, or helps us to forget for a moment, the fact that the zoo is actually *not* the jungle and that the animals in it are not wild and free, but captive and semi-domesticated.

Part of a reptile exhibit at one of the zoos visited by TR featured a small bridge that arched over two pools. To one side of the bridge a waterfall tumbled down over a wall covered with plants into a small, deep pool containing some large fish and a Malaysian giant turtle (*Orlitia borneensis*). To the other side a female West African dwarf crocodile (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) with some of her offspring lay on the rocks at the edge of a wide, shallow pool that was also home to some small fish. TR could hear a chorus of chirping that he assumed to be another recording designed to produce a tropical atmosphere. However, the information board informed him that Trinidad Stream Frogs (*Mannophryne trinitatis*) could be seen around the waterfall and could also be heard chirping loudly like crickets. Try as he might, TR couldn’t see the frogs, but their chirping was clear and rich. In combination with the falling water sound from the waterfall the impression it created was quite beautiful. The zoo had clearly been successful here in creating what, for TR, was a pleasant and interesting atmosphere, but it was not necessarily an atmosphere that was jungle-like (in any case, TR has never visited a jungle so would not be able to judge), nor can it conceivably have been at atmosphere at once like Malaysia, West Africa and Trinidad where the species in the exhibit could respectively be found in the wild (and again, having never visited these places, TR is not qualified to make a judgement here). It was not even an atmosphere like a non-specific elsewhere. Instead the zoo had succeeded in creating a distinctive atmosphere that was qualitatively different from any other space in TR’s experience. This atmosphere is that of the Reptile House. Zoos, then, produce their own distinctive atmospheres, which are authentic in that they are authentically zoo-like.

4 DIRECTING PEOPLE

What one might tend to hear most on a busy day in a zoo are neither the animals nor even the recordings of jungly sounds, but the other people who are visiting the zoo. There is likely to be talking, but also sounds of fun and excitement: shouting and shrieking among the children who are perhaps the most important customer group for zoos. For that reason, the atmosphere can, at times, resemble that of other human-dominated leisure spaces such as the theme park, the funfair or the carnival.

There is a direct connection between the atmospheres we perceive and the way we act and behave. Zoo atmospheres are designed to afford satisfying and full experiences for visitors, but are also meant to make them act in certain predictable ways. Atmospheres direct people's behaviour. In a zoo setting, this idea of direction is all-important. Given the comparatively recent repositioning of zoos as places of conservation and education, it is imperative that zoos direct people to think and feel in certain ways about the animals they see. Zoos want people to enjoy their visiting experience, but they also increasingly want them to value and care about the animals they see in the zoo and their conspecifics in the wild. Just as the music used in shopping malls contains instructions for the shoppers on how they should feel when using the products on display (cf. Sterne 1997), zoos use sound to influence our relation to the animals in them. Zoos want people to feel by turns excited, awestruck, concerned and so on, and sound is one of the ways in which they convey this direction and orchestrate the visiting experience. For instance, one zoo visited by TR had an underground viewing area with a huge glass window through which seals could be seen swimming underwater. Slow, ambient, aquatic-sounding music was being played in this space. There was no information on what the music was, who wrote it and when or with what intentions, but the music happened to be very effective in accompanying and enhancing the grace of a South American fur seal (*Arctocephalus australis*) that could be seen making long and seemingly effortless upside-down glides and tight acrobatic turns in the water. Other visitors were also gazing, some speaking but in hushed, almost whispered tones. The music had succeeded in producing an atmosphere that was quiet and respectful, that was a cue for but also afforded the expression of admiration and wonder.

5 ATMOSPHERES FOR NON-HUMAN ANIMALS

Atmospheres in zoos are designed with their human recipients in mind. It is people, or more precisely, zoo visitors, that are the intended atmospheric audience. But the same soundscape that is used more or less successfully, for instance, to induce a feeling of being in a jungle, may have very different effects on those who work in or around that exhibit and who for that reason are constantly subjected to it. Through its constant repetition, the intended atmospheric effect of the recording may well become lost on keepers and other zoo employees, for instance. We might wonder, too, about the effect a soundtrack chosen to create the "right" atmosphere for

the zoo's visitors has on the animals in the enclosure. Perhaps crocodiles in an exhibit where sounds are used to create a "swamp-like" effect experience those sounds very differently from the exhibit's human designers and visitors. Perhaps the noise worries them and should therefore be considered a potential welfare concern. Also, given that people may not all be affected by a soundscape in the same way, it is quite possible that individual animals in the zoo experience the artificial acoustic environments in which they are obliged to live in various, but equally atmospheric ways. It is beyond the scope of this chapter, but certainly important to consider, whether there are particular sound environments that do enable the production of atmospheres in which zoo animals (at the level of the individual as well as the species) feel comfortable.

Whether non-human animals actually perceive atmospheres is of course an open question, one that, curiously, never really comes up in the philosophical literature, possibly because the study of atmospheres, as with the current chapter, heavily relies on the first-person perspective, with which non-human animals cannot provide us. So it is difficult to know for sure. But if they do, we cannot necessarily expect those atmospheres to be similar to the ones we perceive in the same situation, simply because how we perceive the world, how it affects us, depends very much on the way we relate to that world: our human needs and desires, hopes and fears, likes and dislikes. By the same token, however, we should fully expect, from what we know about atmospheres, that non-human animals also experience them, because atmospheres are there for us not insofar as we are thinking beings, but insofar as we are animals: embodied, world-inhabiting beings in a world that can harm and destroy us, or sustain and support us. It is true that in our own case what we know and believe, certain conceptual associations as well as emotional connotations and phenomenal characters all co-determine the atmosphere we experience. However, atmospheres are not a product of abstract thinking. They affect us more viscerally because they are tied to our creaturely needs and vulnerabilities, expressing our basic relation to the world, so that if anything it should be expected that animals are just as subject to atmospheric perception as humans, and likely even more so. We should therefore assume that there are atmospheres within enclosures or within species-specific and perhaps even inter-species groups at the zoo. A troop of Hamadryas baboons (*Papio hamadryas*) in one enclosure TR visited, for instance, may well be able to wake up in the morning and intuit the general mood of their group, picking up on the atmosphere, which might be one of tension, hostility, calm, euphoria or many other things, depending on group dynamics, but not reducible to it.

6 CONCLUSION

Zoos are very much concerned with the production of atmospheres, and sound is centrally involved in this process. By producing atmospheres, they build, shape and regulate the relations between the people (the visitors, but also those working there) and the space they temporarily or routinely inhabit. Since that space is a zoo space, that is, one that is filled with animals, it is inevitable that the resulting atmospheres also shape and regulate our relation to those animals (as well as, presumably, their relation to us). As we have seen, zoos are atmospherically complex, and they face continual challenges as they try to design and maintain atmospheres in line with simultaneous continuity and change in their declared purpose as sites for entertainment, education and increasingly, conservation and the encouragement of environmentally responsible behaviour. Perhaps the key atmospheric challenge for zoos is to reconcile visitors' desire to observe and experience forms of natural and ecological otherness (often simulacra of geographically distant environments, though these should not be so real and convincing that they scare visitors off) with the realities of managing and displaying closely controlled animal populations.

Earlier, we raised the question as to whether animals might experience atmospheres, and whether atmospheres might conceivably be designed with their well-being in mind. This kind of "atmospheric thinking" (which has clear ethical implications) could represent an interesting future direction for zoos. What atmospheres *should* we want at zoos? What atmospheres might be best for all concerned, animal residents as well as visitors and keepers? "Thinking atmospherically" might also present a means of stimulating reflection: challenging zoos and their visitors to think about what kinds of atmosphere they *really* want, and are happy to be complicit in producing.

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Atmospheric Aestheses: Law as Affect

Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos

1 INTRODUCTION

Law as commodity value is not a new position (Pashukanis 1987; see also Milovanovic 1981). The most easily recognisable forms of law (state law, private law, corporations law, etc.) have always been associated with an economic value, which sits, albeit with some unease, both next to the functional value of the law, as the order provider in society, and its more idealised value as provider of justice. Law's commodity value, however, is increasingly superseded by its affective value, namely law's ability to stage itself and communicate to the world that itself and none other *is* the law. This is not purely a declaratory need: it is not enough for law to say that it is law. It has to stage itself in a consumer-oriented way, to market itself in a socially engaging way and to package itself in a media-appetising way.

How law stages itself is now the predominant aesthetic question of our times. More than at any other time in history, law is now called to generate an atmosphere of legality, fairness, universality, justice and other such values, through which the law draws its relevance. Law, just as everything else, has succumbed to the embrace of atmospherics that demand of law a differentiated behaviour, one that matches the expectations of a consumerist, immunised and segregated society.

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In what follows, I first look at the shift from aesthetics to aestheses, namely from ideas about law and aesthetics as beauty or art, to aestheses of immersion, namely immersion into affects that involve sensorial and emotional responses. I argue that law is deeply involved with the affective turn because of the demands to stage itself affectively. This is part of what I have called engineered atmospherics (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2015), which can be defined as the excess of legal affect that is directed in a certain way in order to produce planned outcomes. In an atmosphere, law can stage its relevance more easily because, if engineered correctly, an atmosphere is a self-perpetuating emergence. What is most dramatic though is that law often needs to dissimulate itself as non-law and withdraw from the atmosphere. Naturally this is just a staged vanishing act, which, however, has serious consequences in terms of the way law functions in society.

2 FROM LEGAL AESTHETICS TO LEGAL AESTHESES

A plethora of literature deals with issues of legal aesthetics.¹ Law and aesthetics has shifted, from the more traditional aesthetic questions of law (law and art, law and beauty, law and the visual, etc.) to the *aesthetic*, namely the sensorial and emotional,² or in short, the affective aspect of law. Jacques Rancière has intimated this shift with his work on the term *aesthesis*, which, for him, signifies “the mode of experience according to which, for two centuries, we perceive very diverse things ... as all belonging to art” (Rancière 2013, x).³

In some respects, this aesthetic focus is a return to the origins of aesthetics. Aristotle referred to the senses and sense perception (‘aestheses’) as the basis of judgement, allowing aesthetics to be thought in its intimate

¹For a relatively recent collection, see Ben-Dor (2011). See also Bruncevic (2016); Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2004); Goodrich (2014); Douzinas and Nead (1999); Gearey (2001); Douzinas and Warrington (1994).

²For example, Barreto (2006); Bently and Flynn (1996); Pavoni et al. (2018–2020).

³Yet, his understanding of the shift, although perspicacious, remains rooted in a phenomenological theory of perception, and his use of senses, while, in theory, moving away from Western understandings of aesthetic appreciation, seem to end up reiterating the same historically anthropocentric, text-focused, male-centred and colonial conception of aesthetics as art. The only reference to art created by women is the *Folies Bergère*, seen through the male gaze of Mallarmé’s writing on them; there is no reference to anything but Western art, and there are only scant references to anything but the visual in terms of senses, making this essentially a classic ocular-centric piece of research. See also Vasquez and Mignolo (2013).

connection to the sensorial.⁴ A departure took place in late modernity, when aesthetics was linked to issues of form and beauty, externalising thus the focus, from the inner mechanisms of senses to the working out of our connection to the world and ultimately to the transcendental horizon needed for the operations of reason (Douzinas 2011, 255). In Aristotle, sensorial involvement is an integral part of acting in a virtuous way, making virtuous judgements about what is good (*'kalon'*) and what is not. The important thing in this process is that, unlike Kantian aesthetics that understands beauty as moral category that ultimately led to reason (Kant 1781; Ronen 2014, 12–13), in Aristotle, reason is not part of the process of aesthetic appreciation and judgement: “The virtuous agent steps back and sees, not the embodiment of a principle of reason, but an instance of aesthetic perfection. He is moved not by the reasonableness of the act, but by its beauty. The noble is fundamentally an aesthetic concept. By this I mean it is a matter of perception and not one of calculation” (Milliken 2006, 327).⁵ While for us, nourished by late modern aesthetics and moral theory, the good is not necessarily the beautiful but rather something at which one arrives after some sort of formulaic calculation (similar to what we think of law), for Aristotle the term *kalon* encompasses both external and internal beauty.

This must be coupled with the role of emotions in Aristotle and, especially, the joy that one draws from having chosen the *kalon*. Again, the emotional element of judgement seems irrelevant to a Kantian aesthetic understanding, where the agent is (expected to be) disinterested and her judgement geared towards universality: “This is something calculated, almost deductive, that we figure out. In the same way that our emotions are not relevant to solving math problems, so [for Kant] they are of no help in ethics either” (Milliken 2006, 334; see also Nussbaum 2013). While not beyond controversy (see Irwin 1986), this reading of Aristotle in relation to Kant is instructive (Deleuze 1963). It allows us to think of aesthetics and aesthetic judgement in particular in a way that includes the sensorial and the emotional.

⁴ Another mode of arriving perhaps at similar arguments in terms of the affective is through Platonic beauty and desire. See Colebrook (2011).

⁵ This is not uncontroversial, and at various points, the aesthetic has been separated from the moral in Aristotle. Milliken, however, makes a compelling argument, confirmed also by the etymology of *kalon*.

The return of senses and emotions has been pioneered by feminist aesthetics. Ann Cahill's work on female beautification, for example, fleshes out the personal and embodied practice of aesthetics, replete with ethnographic sensorial and emotional references (Cahill 2003). This is in the core of the shift to affective aesthetics: no longer grand definitional pronouncements but specific events with which bodies are engaged. This is inevitable in view of the knowledge, ripe by the early 1990s when some of the most important feminist writing on aesthetics emerges (Hein and Korsmeyer 1990; Hein et al. 1990), that femininity and womanhood cannot be forced into unitary definitions, as Hilde Hein finds (1993; see also Battersby 1994).⁶ An important consequence of this is also the shift of focus from the individual subject (which is often a critique against the male bias of existing aesthetics and the standard figure of a male artistic genius⁷) to the emergence of aesthetic production from within the social/temporal/spatial parameters of the event—what we could call an ontological, situated and assemblage-immersed, rather than a phenomenologically subjective, understanding.

Similar moves are being made in various other minoritarian aesthetics,⁸ with one of the most important ones taking place in decolonial literature. Rolando Vasquez and Walter D. Mignolo have written about decolonial aesthesis (capitalised S) as “processes of thinking and doing, of sensing and existing, in which the modern distinction between theory and practice has no purchase” (2013). In the context of decolonialism, aesthesis acquires a polemic character that challenges the predominance of colonial aesthetic canons: “Decolonial aestheSis starts from the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception. Modern aestheTics have played a key role in configuring a canon, a normativity that enabled the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices, or, more precisely, other forms of aestheSis, of sensing and perceiving” (Vasquez and Mignolo 2013).⁹ Transposing this onto more narrowly defined legal aesthetics, the colonial norm of determining

⁶ Feminist aesthetics have been working the way in law as well: see Rose (1996, 613).

⁷ In relation to law, Craig (2007, 207).

⁸ See, for example, queer aesthetics as an ethical Deleuzian position in Colebrook (2011), or as ‘promiscuous’ substitutability of art in Williford (2009), or black queer aesthetics in Lara (2012).

⁹ See also transnationaldecolonialinstitute.wordpress.com/decolonial-aesthetics/ (Accessed November 6, 2018).

Western law as *the* law has been, and still is, in the core of the definitional aesthetics of law. In their attempt at defining law, legal aesthetics have regularly been marginalising other forms of law, and especially law that emerges from the colonised.

Senses and emotions have an increasing role in prefiguring and determining non-Western, non-exclusively male, decolonial aesthetics, and, in their turn, these minoritarian aesthetics are changing aesthetics as a whole. A way to contextualise this shift is to think of aestheses in terms of affects and the affective turn in law (e.g. Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2015; Fleming 2013). While there are many ways to approach affects, fleshed out by Spinoza and incorporated in contemporary theory by Deleuze and Guattari (1980), suffice it to say that affects include emotions and senses generated in a human or non-human body, while at the same time exceeding the body, leading thus to an affective excess (for more details, see Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2015). The affective challenge is double: first, to understand affect as an indistinguishable emergence of emotions and senses and, second, to take affects, not as human-originating qualities but as posthuman, acentral, excessive attributes that, as I show below, often coalesce into an atmosphere. Affect is posthuman, in that it neither originates nor ends necessarily in humans; acentral, in that it floats about rather than causally originating in one source and excessive of its body of origin.

The affective turn brings a renewed interest in understanding the law aesthetically. The shift in terms of aesthetics has been described by the Gernot Böhme: “Aesthetics in the modern age has two sources: one in German rationalism, the other in English sensualism. The former is generally privileged in the history of aesthetics because it is the one which culminates in aesthetics as the theory of the work of art.” Böhme continues: “while aesthetics as a theory of the work of art was substantially responsible for creating a canon of great or authentic works—to use Adorno’s terms—the aesthetics of taste [the second type of aesthetics] was much more concerned with aesthetic education [...]. Taste, after all, serves not only to judge objects or works of art adequately, but is rather the ability to make distinctions of all kinds” (2016, 55). It would not be out of place, therefore, to consider English aesthetics the aesthetic theory behind the affective turn. Works by Edmund Burke (1757), for example, on the sublime and the beautiful have managed to infiltrate and to some extent alter the understanding of not just art but aesthetics, without being invested in establishing a *modus operandi* of appreciating art per se, but rather about

discerning the beautiful. Likewise, Joseph Addison's definition of taste decidedly brings together senses and emotions, in a gesture that prefaces contemporary affective theory.¹⁰ Transposing this to law, we see how legal aesthetics is moving to the formation of taste, and specifically the contextualisation of the drawing of legal distinctions: for some time now, in terms of legal theory, law's universality has been ceding priority to the particularity of the context of the legal judgement (Douzinas and Warrington 1994). This aesthetic move, largely brought in by critical legal theory, is complemented by Spinozan understandings of ethics which oppose universal morality and focus on the particular conditions of the assemblage, and in particular the spatial and temporal distribution of the bodies in relation to which a decision is taken and a distinction of distance or propinquity is made (Spinoza 1677). This is signalling another passage which can be considered parallel to that between aesthetics and aestheses: the passage from legal morality as a blanket universaliser, to ethics as a case-by-case and assemblage-by-assemblage decision-making process.

While this shift from aesthetic to aestheses and from morality to ethics, therefore, allows us to become more aware of other aesthetics, it is important not to overestimate the possibilities for positive action that come from such a shift. Just as we move away from universal morality, we also move away from the possibility of securing, however illusionarily or arbitrarily, *a priori* values. This means that a shift towards affects and ethics necessitates the acknowledgment that we can no longer prescribe in advance how the law ought to be (and even when we carry on, we are hardly heeded), but rather that we can only focus on the matter in hand, namely the particular situation in which the law is called upon every time. While this is undoubtedly positive and moves in the direction of a law responsive to the particular, it also has some potentially negative consequences. First, law can no longer rely on its assumed functional value or even legitimate violence in order to remain relevant to society, but has to stage itself in a convincing and appealing way—in other words, it must constantly prove itself, and the means are not necessarily those of justice and fairness but more often than not market values. Second, and connected to the above, in its staging, law often has to dissimulate itself as non-law. I will be dealing with these two consequences in what follows.

¹⁰ Addison (in Addison and Steele 1712): "That faculty of soul, which discerns the beauties of an author with pleasure, and the imperfections with dislike". Although Addison relies more on imagination than the pure inner senses' reliance of someone like Shaftesbury.

3 STAGING LAW

There is little doubt that from a phenomenological point of view, law stages the world for us. We are the prized audience for such a staging, the honoured guest but also, and this is where the phenomenological illusion comes in, the ones who can change that if they so wished. We are the subjects in a world full of objects waiting to be apprehended. Our dispositifs of visibility, one of them also law, encourage and reinforce this unidirectionality. What is more, the connection between us and the world, as mediated by legal intentionality, retains the illusion of control. This is a human gaze after all and can be differently directed.¹¹

Yet, with the move from aesthetics to aestheses, such anthropocentric illusions can no longer be easily entertained. Law is not only staging the world for us as a neoliberal horizon. Rather, law is staging *itself* in a neoliberal way, largely relying on the illusion of contractual freedom “if you do not like it, you can always say no”. By staging itself as contractual, law meddles not just with the phenomenological mediation between subjects and world, but with the very ontology of the world and the taken-for-granted category of subjects. Law staging itself means that the world becomes absorbed in law’s representation of the world: the only possible world is the one offered by the staged law. This is not simply a question of a phenomenological perspective on the world that can change if the subject, in whose perception the world also falls, changes. On the contrary, this is an intervention on the level of ontology: by staging itself, law alters not just the representation of the world but the world itself. And because law is no longer a priori thought but only situationally, it can import nothing of its supposed ideals of equity, fairness and justice in that staging, unless of course this is what is needed in that particular staging.

In most cases, however, what is ‘needed’ is a perpetuation of the neoliberal model. This is what Böhme calls aesthetic economics (Böhme 1995), namely the way in which commodities are staged: “to increase their exchange value, commodities are now presented in a special way, they are given a look, they are aestheticized and are put on show in the exchange sphere... to the extent that use is now made of their attractiveness, their glow, their atmosphere: they themselves contribute to the staging, the dressing up and enhancement of life” (Böhme 2016, 20). Just like

¹¹ See my critique of phenomenology in Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2016). See, however, Griffero (2014) on the limits of phenomenological control.

other commodities, law is packaged in order to become attractive, to the point that its ‘staging value’ (Böhme 2016, 68) becomes much more important than its initial commodity exchange value. Law stages itself through media, both traditional and social, by becoming spectacular, twitter-based and responsive to social pressures, sacrificing its supposed myth of neutrality for another myth, that of popular value. It stages itself in support of traditional and conservative regimes of property, and aesthetically sides with the old ‘art canon’ of high art, while failing to recognise street art as art (Young 2013; Finchett-Maddock forthcoming). It stages itself with the help of technology, by becoming a service product given to entrepreneurship and innovation, computerised and binarised, standardised rather than contingent. It finally stages itself pedagogically so as to become a mechanical degree that leads to good exam results and even better career prospects, bypassing much needed spaces of open thought and critique. “The aesthetic quality of the commodity, the commodity aesthetic, acts to put life on show. Capitalism is to be defined as the aesthetic economy in so far as it produces primarily aesthetic values, that is, commodities that act as the staging of life” (Böhme 2016, 68). Life is, therefore, mediated by law and its aesthetic value, put on show via law.

However, as I mentioned earlier, this is just the first step. The most important development is that the ontology of law, and consequently life and the world, changes because of law’s aestheticisation. To put it simply, law’s staging *is* the law. There is no other law behind this stage, better or grander, more universal or more sovereign that directs the staging and ultimately remaining solid, reliable, valuable per se, in touch with its social function and necessity. The stage is all there is: a scraggy immanence, brittle and unhinged, unable to entertain even the illusion of transcendence, of a better law to come.

4 ATMOSPHERICS

A way for law to stage itself is through the construction of a legal atmosphere. Building on the affective turn in law and staying within an ontological take that does not regard senses and emotions as phenomenological and human-centred attributes but rather as ontological emergences (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2015), we find that law is an institutional affect, namely an affect that becomes directed by the atmosphere it generates. For, although an affect is excessive, acentral and posthuman, it is regularly manipulated or at least smoothed in an institutionalised direction.

Lyotard (1974) describes affects as the libidinal intensities that allow a system to direct desire. In that sense, affects are regularly exploited and channelled to serve consumerist needs, capitalist abstractions, legal obedience and political placation.

The collective affect is the constituent element of an atmosphere. I have previously defined an atmosphere as the ontology of affective excess that emerges by, through and against human and non-human bodies (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2015). If affect is the intercorporeal element that keeps bodies together, an atmosphere is the excess of affects emerging as an order of sorts. An atmosphere is often put in the service of consumerist, religious, political and other purposes. Above all, however, an atmosphere is engineered in order to promote its own perpetuation. This means that, upon the atmospheric emergence, the various affects are instrumentalised in order to feed and preserve the atmosphere.

Thus, in an atmosphere of legal and political oppression, affects between, say, neighbours or between humans and property, will be put in the service of the oppressive atmosphere, reinforcing it from within. Diverging affects, such as resistance or disobedience, have sometimes the effect of breaking the oppressive atmosphere and moving on; but as often as not, they are co-opted and anticipated by the atmosphere, and used as a way of reinforcing the atmosphere (say, by demonising the resistance movement as anarchists, etc.).

For the law to keep on proving itself, it needs to engineer an atmosphere of legality, fairness, universality, justice and other such values. While these values are integral in legal delivery, they need to be spectacularised in order for law to be relevant. As I have mentioned, the spectacularisation of law becomes *the* law. Rancière writes that the *mise-en-scène* was “an art born out of the reversal by which the auxiliary art that was supposed to put drama in tableaux and in movement proved to be the means of renewing it, of giving thought fixed in words the spatial form that suits it” (Rancière 2013, 89). Ironically, this reversal has now become ontological and has taken up all available space. Law invests on “an *appearance* or *look*, endowing [it] with a *radiance* or *glow*, an atmosphere” (Böhme 2016, 20). A legal atmosphere is the perfect setup for law’s staging itself: once set up, the atmosphere perpetuates itself. It does so by converting into ‘needs’ the various desires that the participating bodies have. Continuing with the neoliberal theme, law creates an atmosphere of contractual freedom, in which bodies simply cannot see the imbalance of power because they are blinded by the apparent fairness and equality of opportunity that

is in the core of a neoliberal law. This desire is individualistic par excellence and has to do with illusionary notions of achieving personal freedom through mortgages, promotions, new gadgets, sports shoes, trendier handbags, and so on. This is not about survival or covering of actual needs. This is pure surplus consumption which “is seldom referred to today as *luxury* or *extravagance*, because it is no longer bound up with certain privileges or limited to certain classes, but is now taken for granted as a universal standard of living” (Böhme 2016, 10)¹²—or at least the universally aspired standard of living, even when basic needs are not covered. In generating and acting through an atmosphere, law matches the expectations of a consumerist society, while keeping on nurturing these expectations so that more of the same is needed. An atmosphere generates a cycle of addiction where, once the supposed desires are converted into ‘real needs’, more of the same is offered continuously and in excess.¹³

On a different level, law is fed by and in turn feeds the ever increasing ‘need’ for security, immunisation, segregation and distancing from risk. There are multiple examples: gated communities whose constitution that exclude everything that does not belong to the aesthetics of the class they are promoting while creating artificial spaces of risk-free ludic pleasures; shopping malls that prohibit all spontaneous street activity while imitating street culture; fortress Europe that professes tolerance and respect for human rights while failing spectacularly to deal with the refugee issues of the early twenty-first century: all these are legal atmospheres that are engineered with the recourse of media, economy, politics, religion and so on. These atmospheres are naturalised because, in a circular, simultaneous manner, they both create and nourish the supposed need for security and immunisation. The Western world is its own glasshouse of atmospheric partitioning (Sloterdijk 2005), with immigration policies that control the use of elements such as water and land in terms of spatial approaches to

¹²This is the point of Sloterdijk (2005, 170): “a climatized luxury shell in which there would be an eternal spring of consensus”. The affectivity of luxury finds its most prominent form in the *Grand Installation* of the glasshouse of capitalism: that “interior-creating violence of contemporary traffic and communication media” (Sloterdijk 2005, 198).

¹³Böhme points out that “desires cannot be permanently satisfied, but only temporarily appeased, since they are actually intensified by being fulfilled” (2016, 11). While this is true for the kind of desires that we could identify as false desires, and that form part of an economy of desire that is indeed inexhaustible, they have to be contrasted to the kind of desire that emerges from a body’s movement and pause, namely the conative desire of a body that is ethically situated in relation to other bodies.

jurisdictional utopias, or the boundary that separates the occident from the orient, constructing both exteriors and interiors through the bent glass of religion, economy, culture and so on. Frantz Fanon writes “the colonial world is a world divided into compartments” (Fanon 1961, 37). Racial violence has often been in the core of atmospheric engineering in the form of racial threat (when in White atmospheres) or racial discrimination and oppression (when in non-White atmospheres). Tayyab Mahmud’s work on postcolonial spaces of oppression shows this amply. Slums are atmospheric constructions where ‘surplus humanity’ is piled up and kept inside through atmospheric techniques of accumulation through dispossession and primitive accumulation (namely Marx’s concept of deprivation of the means of subsistence) (Mahmud 2010). These techniques define the exterior of the slum as a non-possibility, thus strengthening what can be described as negative belonging, that is, belonging because of the impossibility of belonging anywhere else.

Atmosphere relies on the circumvention of reason.¹⁴ Although of course reason is not always a guarantee for sound solutions, it can and does shatter the atmospheric glass bubble when employed (although again, in a convincing and appealing manner, so in a way, still within the confines of atmospheric aesthetics). But the move to aestheses means that atmospheric engineering relies precisely on this bypassing of consciousness and the appealing instead to sensorial and emotional responses. Atmospheric mobilises the full sensorium and its connection to the emotional,¹⁵ and often reaches the point of synaesthetic disorientation of the kind that makes a body an even more pliable participant (e.g. Khan 2016; Marusek 2016). Again, this does not make atmospheric any more or less worthy or, conversely, risky. It only means that this kind of reaction can be manipulated more easily and put in the service of atmospheric perpetuation.

Perhaps the main point about engineered atmospheric is that it relies on the desire of the participating bodies to preserve the atmospheric status quo. Foucaultian power welling up from everywhere means that law is not just top-down state law but an institutional affect in and between bodies.

¹⁴ An atmosphere “precedes analysis and influences from the outset the emotional situation of the perceiver, resisting moreover any conscious attempt at projective adaptation” (Griffero 2013).

¹⁵ See, for example, Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2013) on intellectual property law and the sensory depletion brought about by copyrighting and patenting of colours, odours, textures and so on. See also Pavoni (2018).

These bodies control each other and themselves even at absence of a top-down state-law. Individual self-policing vies with collective behavioural pressures to fit in, and the fundamental desire to belong becomes exploited by atmospherics. An atmosphere presents itself as an ontological singularity, quite apart from the rest of the world assemblage, but safe, insular, community-like, and, what is more, emerging rather than engineered. In other words, just as law needs to stage itself, so does an atmosphere: it needs to dissimulate the fact that it is engineered for a specific purpose, and rather appear as spontaneous, emergent and even inevitable.

5 DISSIMULATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The greatest conjuring effect of an atmosphere is its ability to appear emergent rather than engineered—indeed, to use Tonino Griffero’s terminology, to appear numinously (Griffero 2014). The irony of this should be made explicit: even an engineered atmosphere operates within the broader atmosphere of packaging, glowing, staging oneself in order to become appealing—in short, operates within an atmosphere. An engineered atmosphere risks appearing forced and therefore unappealing. A naturalised atmosphere, namely one that dissimulates its engineering and dons instead the cloak of emergence, stages itself successfully. Atmospheric self-dissimulation means that an atmosphere dissimulates itself (as well as its origin and its non-top-down, rhizomatic, intercorporeal controlling nature) as non-atmosphere. In a self-dissimulating atmosphere, that most accomplished of atmospheres, there is nothing to go against: the atmosphere has converted itself into Quixotic windmills.

But what is there beyond the atmosphere? What lies behind the glass walls of an atmospheric stage, or indeed once these walls have been ruptured following successful resistance? There lies what I have called the lawscape, namely the ontological and epistemological tautology of law and matter. Briefly put, there is no law that is immaterial, namely aspatial and not embodied; likewise, there is no piece of matter that is not emanating and partaking of a legal regime of material (spatial and temporal) order. The main characteristic of the lawscape is that it can play with its degrees of visibilisation, making itself fully visible when needed (e.g. an airport control where space, time and human and non-human bodies operate in a heightened lawscaping mode that aims at conveying bodies on the other side) and withdrawing from visibility when a softer, less obviously legal space is needed (e.g. a café with tables available to sit, provided that one

orders something). This means that, depending on the degree of visibilisation, a body is more or less able to manoeuvre the lawscape, namely to act lawfully or unlawfully, to ignore ethical and more strictly legal commands, to embark on unscripted lines of flight, excesses, conflicts or revolts.

In an atmosphere, however, a body is somnambulistically, as Gabriel Tarde (1903) would put it, following, not so much a leader or supposed authority, as its own desire to be part of the atmospherics. Since a body is tied up sensorially and emotionally, and the atmospheric addresses a body's preconscious state, there is hardly any space for manoeuvring, negotiating and essentially using the law (as one would do in the lawscape) and its potentially transformative effect in order to position oneself better in the wider assemblage. An atmosphere feels like the City of God, where justice reigns supreme, everything has found its perfect emplacement and there is no reason to move. But this is exactly the freezing effect of an atmosphere, where bodies are paralysed in an all-embracing aestheses of fake belonging. What is more, if a legal atmosphere is successfully staged, the absence of legal possibilities is not felt. This is because of yet another grand dissimulation: the lawscape has withdrawn from the atmosphere, leaving in its place a supposedly anomic utopia where no law is needed except for the foundational atmospheric distinction between the belonging inside the atmosphere and the exclusion outside.

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The Lesser Existence of Ambiance

Jean-Paul Thibaud

Ambiance captivates yet at the same time it slips through our grasp. It defies any summons that is too final, any approach too essentialist, because its existence is fragile and precarious, fleeting and evanescent. Sometimes a breath of air, a murmur, a gesture or a glance is sufficient for a particular ambiance to take hold, shift or vanish. A busker strikes up and the whole tone of the neighbourhood changes, a moment's indiscretion may wreck a party, a sudden storm transforms the mood of the whole city. It often takes very little to alter an atmosphere, for the aspect and pace of a gathering to change. Might ambiance be rooted in a slight, spectral way of being, in a “*lesser existence*” (Lapoujade 2017; my transl.)? Pursuing this line of thought prompts us to register a precarious mode of existence, an affair of nuance and degree, halfway between a full, integral presence and a complete absence of reality. A half-tone presence-absence rooted in an attenuated reality. Ambiance struggles to get a hearing, without being non-existent, illusory or unreal. It proceeds in terms of vagueness, be it a question of semantics, ontology or epistemology (Rauh 2017). But although its existence is never entirely certain, that does not mean it is without effect or consequence. On the contrary an ambiance only exists in its action, when it exerts an influence and we experience its authority (Griffero 2010). Far from dissociating cause and effect, ambiance merges them into one. It is

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not the cause of an influence, rather the influence itself. As Riedel (2016) has shown, drawing on music, atmospheres do not induce alterations in our awareness or body, they *are* these alterations. Furthermore an ambience uses a particularly effective *modus operandi*, being unobtrusive and barely noticeable. It only unfolds in the transformations that it brings about, the pregnancies it deploys. So what happens when we look at ambience in terms of effectuation rather than determination? In what resides its aptitude to permeate everyday experience and set the tone of humdrum situations? However precarious and shifting it may be, an ambience exercises *powers of impregnation* that must be brought to light.

To explore these questions we may adopt three complementary perspectives, all of which register the lesser existence of ambience while putting its *modus operandi* to the test. We may start by positioning ourselves on a medial plane and approach ambience as a bridge, an *in-between*. By focusing our attention on sensory flows we may highlight its immersive capacity. We may then move to a vital plane and query ambience in terms of *attunement*. The opening to affects prompts us to emphasize its capacity for animation. Lastly we may consider a social plane and explore ambience as a *background*. Introducing gesture helps us to reveal its capacity for acclimatization. By proceeding in this way our purpose is to probe ambience, starting from its intensive forces and moments of establishment. Opening the way for ambience's powers of impregnation, these three paths share the same basic argument: experiencing ambience entails an imperceptible transformation in us, but through such contact, we too change it. In other words, ambience exerts unobtrusive forms of influence and at the same time it is affected by the existences it accompanies.

1 IMMERSION: AMBIANCE AS AN IN-BETWEEN

To address ambience as a bridge—a *metaxu* or in-between—means paying attention to the medium, to an intermediate term between sentient subject and sensed object (Böhme 2016). Think of the light that bathes us, of an odour as it disperses, the air we breathe or sound propagating. All are vectors of ambience blending into our situated sensory experience; all are disseminated by devices such as sound systems, lighting, air-conditioning, ventilation, odourization. Starting from the medium prompts us to take account of what is happening between things, to look at intervals, spacing, margins, envelopes, membranes and interstices rather than at objects themselves. Of the order of a flow, ambience is a movement in its becoming rather than a substantial world properly speaking. It is difficult to grasp

because it proceeds from a pervasive dynamic field which defies any attempt to bring it into focus. It is consequently difficult to pin it down to a specific point in space, because it is constantly connecting and dispersing, and because it operates more as a condition of perception than as a perceptible object in its own right. Various formulations and arguments have been advanced in this respect, showing that “in the medium, the presence of things is perceivable” (Böhme 1992, 99), that “we do not perceive ambiance but according to ambiance” (Thibaud 2003, 293; my transl.) or, indeed, that though “we do not see light, we do see in light” (Ingold 2011, 138). Such considerations have one important consequence, asserting the capacity of ambiance to make the world perceptible, to make it appear, to contribute to our ability to sense lived-in spaces. In this respect, Emmanuel Coccia (2010) writes of the power of “sensification” of the medium, its aptitude to phenomenalize the world by making it visible, audible, palpable and breathable.

But it is important to stay as close as possible to concrete situations in order to understand how an ambiance confers its sensory content on the surroundings. Light, sound, odour, heat and, more broadly, air are plastic media, both receptive and responsive to the conditions of their propagation. As they diffuse they are charged by the space they cross, coloured by the shapes and materials they meet, potentialized by the attention and practices they solicit, configuring themselves in the form of prompts and events. Ambiance is thus a matter of contextual physics which cannot elude the *in situ* test (Augoyard 2005). In other words media do not make the world perceptible in a generic, non-differentiated way; on each occasion they specify the sensory environment, the perceptual context. For example subterranean spaces lend substance to sensory conditions that may be stressful, hyper-stimulating, unsettling or enveloping, giving rise to original perceptual situations and composing a singular sensory ecology (Chelkoff, Thibaud 2000). So underground ambiances tend to restrict the perceptual field of passers-by (narrowing the scope of what they see and hear), neutralize perception of time, raise sensory thresholds, homogenize and distort physical signals. Such ambiances do not so much enable us to perceive new objects as to experience original conditions of perception. In developing the notion of ambiance in terms of “*formant*”, Grégoire Chelkoff (2010, 22) explores the various ways in which architectural forms play a part in the becoming of the sensory world: “The aim therefore is not to describe form as it would be or appear, but rather how it sensorizes a setting—and relations—and, in so doing, intensifies it, literally makes it

present, makes each of us present to one another there” (my transl.). Which means that media are rooted in material devices which inform and alter them, making them ecologically effective. Even more broadly, ambient flows always proceed from situated assemblage, which may equally well consist of technical devices and materialities, regional climates and seasonalities, ordinary practices and sociabilities, ambiance coalescing the various components to form a sensory environment in its own right. In this respect, impregnation always works on a singular environment, sensorily conditioning a lived-in environment. It presupposes the composition and arrangement of ambient flows, which endow the sensory environment with specific qualities and characteristics.

As a qualified medium, an ambiance clearly enables us to feel the concrete space-time continuum in which we evolve. Better still it weaves together the sensory context of situations by giving our experience of them a spatial and temporal dimension. Not only is an ambiance always situated, it is “situating” too, playing an active part in individuating, singularizing and qualifying a situation. In this respect Peter Sloterdijk (2004) has forged the concept of *insulation* to highlight the making of islands which form so many climatic installations bathing in a specific medium and infusing experience accordingly. Although we are constantly shifting from one ambiance to another, each one may be considered as a miniature world, with its own consistency and pregnancy. Ambiance’s sensifying power is consequently also power of immersion. This is not simply due to the fact that media encircles—enveloping and surrounding on all sides—nor yet that they are modelled on the basis of the spaces they invest but also that they impress and commotion, lending themselves to all manner of passive synthesis, sensory effects (Augoyard, Torgue 2005) and atmospheric affordances (Griffero 2014) which make up a situation and put us directly in contact with it. In this way ambiance enables us to be truly part of the world. One of its most remarkable features does not only concern its pathic dimension but also its phatic function, its capacity to activate contacts by means of media (Morton 2007). So the relation thus established with our surroundings is not so much one of containing as of conniving. In so far as ambiance demonstrates its ability to achieve an effect and suggest movements, and to take possession of bodies, it has more to do with a logic of exposure than of inclusion (Ghitti 1998). So it is not enough to say that ambiance is a matter of situated experience, rather that ambiance itself contributes to the situated, grounded experience. As a preliminary approximation, impregnation designates the *modus operandi* by which an ambiance updates its sensitive and immersive power.

2 ANIMATION: AMBIANCE AS ATTUNEMENT

By addressing ambiance in terms of tone—*Stimmung* or attunement—we may place the emphasis on our ability to be affected by our surroundings and, in turn, affect them. According to this second perspective affect is conjugated with percept, feeling with perceiving. In other words ambiance does not only exert a power of immersion but also of animation, in the most forceful sense of the term, through its ability to breathe new life into a situation. In this respect it may be distinguished from notions of environment and milieu by giving all the room it deserves to the vital force of lived-in spaces.

It is difficult to give an empirical account of this fundamental dimension of feeling, but by working on perceptual breaches and borderline situations, we certainly stand a good chance of revealing it. In a fine text on people caring for the homeless in Paris, Breviglieri (2013) describes in great detail how certain conditions—their senses dulled by drink, lack of sleep or intense cold—momentarily extinguish the “spark of feeling”, obliging carers to initiate “a current of good humour”. A borderline situation of this sort “initially requires carers to connive with the realms of shifting perception inhabited by the homeless while generating threads of mutual resonance. This done, it all depends on the way the ambiance spreads and takes hold, unleashing the insensible and allowing the sensible to emerge” (Breviglieri 2013, 5; my transl.). In the present case the act of creating an ambiance for the relationship is of prime importance, helping to make contact and activate the irreducible scrap of feeling that might otherwise vanish altogether.

As we can see ambiance relates fundamentally to our vital contact with reality (Minkowski 1927). Seizing on the metaphor of the Eolian harp Gaston Bachelard (1957) proposed the notion of *tonalization* to describe how we enter into sympathy with and resonate to the vibrations of the ambient world. On this depends our intense relation with our surroundings, the rhythmic participation and energetic communication which constitutes the world of feeling (Boissière 2016). To describe the pathic side of ambiance we need to move beyond purely factual observation, strictly objective givens, opening our senses to secondary qualities: the timbre of a voice, the brightness of light, the momentum behind a gesture. We thus assume the role of modal anthropologists, attentive to modulations in the sensory, to its tiny connections and transitions (Laplantine 2005). As James Ash and Lesley Anne Gallacher (2015) have shown, attunement consists in

precisely this capacity to sense differences, much as when we need to fine-tune a musical instrument. Here is the condition by which an *ambiance* really affects a person experiencing it. Woolf (1923, 20) expresses it admirably in an evocation of London: “Big Ben was striking as she stepped out into the street. It was eleven o’clock and the unused hour was fresh as if issued to children on a beach. But there was something solemn in the deliberate swing of the repeated strokes; something stirring in the murmur of wheels and the shuffle of footsteps”. The solemn becomes the mode to which the world is attuned at that point in time while, in one word, stirring sums up the state of slight tension to which Mrs Dalloway temporarily attunes herself.

Just think of the electric density of the Goutte d’Or neighbourhood (Milliot 2013), the magic of Parc de la Villette (Jarrigeon 2013) or the festive buzz of Canal Saint-Martin (Jolé 2006), all in Paris, France. Clearly an *ambiance* breathes life into a setting to different degrees and in very diverse forms, so many singular ways of connecting to our surroundings and experiencing them. So it is not so much a question of treating *ambiance* as one among many objects that could be hypostasized and designated as such, more a force in action which each time colours the whole of a situation. By setting the tone *ambiance* confers a certain aspect—a certain affective tonality—on our immediate surroundings. It is that by which a setting becomes truly expressive and lively, that by which bodies join in harmony and synch with their environment. So we should think of *ambiance* not so much in terms of being as of ways of being. The aim here is to introduce the question of feeling, but we should bear in mind that “each feeling is characterized by its own manner, a tonality distinguishing it from all others” (Debaise 2015, 94; my transl.). The substantial what of *ambiance* is supplanted here by the effective how of ambient attunements. By attuning experience, *ambiance* proceeds through an operative gesture rather than a state of things, a motor imagination rather than a given setting.

This enlivening power exists because *ambiance* demonstrates a capacity to take hold, displaying a force of possession and activating a sense of being alive (Schmitz 2016). It places the body in a particular state of tension and plays a fundamental part in its vitality. Which brings us to being seized, a key plank in the conception of the *pathic* proposed by Erwin Straus: “Tone has an activity all its own, it presses in on us, surrounds, seizes, and embraces us” (1930, 16). We should remember that *tonos* relates to that which tenses, and that setting the tone is both a matter of initiating a tonality (affective resonance) and exerting a tonicity (motor inducement). Tonality

and tonicity merely form two sides of the same coin, in so far as an intrinsic link exists between feeling and moving (Straus 1935).

In revealing vitality affects, Daniel Stern (1985) provided us with valuable help in accounting for the elementary phenomena, which underpin the affective tuning inherent in ambiance. Impossible to reduce to categorized emotions (sadness, anger, fear and such) and relating to amodal perception (all sensory modalities merged into one), vitality affects proceed by sensible and kinesis micro-dynamics which map out the temporal contour of feelings. Terms such as “arise”, “vanish” or “break out” are attempts at putting words on how ways of feeling are activated in the course of experience and proceed from “sharing the vitality dynamic flow” (Stern 2010, 53). Seen from this perspective, impregnation proceeds from the low-intensity dynamics, which work on bodies through their affects and tone. In so doing, the micro-dynamics give consistency and pregnancy to an ambiance, at the same time, as they attune the world and induce a specific way of experiencing it.

3 ACCLIMATIZATION: AMBIANCE AS BACKGROUND

Approaching ambiance as background helps us to understand how it infuses our various ways of being together. Seen from this perspective ambiance relates to the sensory context of a form of social life and engages a socio-aesthetic of living in. Built into ordinary practices and local customs, it blends with the stream of daily life and accompanies everyday activities. We may speak here of the lesser existence of ambiance, due to its associate nature, integrated in our slightest deeds and gestures, part of the “minor mode of reality” (Piette 1996; my transl.). Of the order of the subordinary, revealing itself in self-evident mode, it steps aside in ongoing affairs and generally goes unnoticed. There are times however when we become aware of it, an ambiance stirring our attention and appearing as such. As Jean-François Augoyard (2016) shows, the realization of a sudden change of tone, our surprise when confronted with an unexpected situation and our wonder at an exceptional sensory quality make up the three modes by which an ambiance manifests itself. An event occurs which disturbs our absorbed coping and brings to the surface what was lurking in the background until then. Such moments of apparition attest in some way to the existence of the ambiance in which we were immersed. But in every case, whether it appears momentarily or remains unnoticed, whether or not it proceeds from an intensification of sensory experience, an ambi-

ance subsists and persists. It leaves a lasting mark on the body of the person experiencing it and ceaselessly leaves additional traces without their knowing. Far from being limited to the here-and-now of ongoing experience, its efficacy is perpetuated over time.

Body and place bear the memory of past ambiances and contribute to restoring them. Though an ambiance is fragile by nature, prompt to unravel and coalesce again at any time, it nevertheless tends to repeat itself in an everyday way, depositing layers of sediment in time and persevering in its being. Routines set in and percepts take shape, lending it a relative constancy and a habituating strength. In other words the acclimatization of the places in which we live contribute to the sense of familiarity we entertain with them (Bégout 2005). Operating by slow, lasting infiltration, by customary use, as time goes by, an ambiance frames the normal forms of perception and gives body to ways of being together. On the one hand, it apportions the perceptible and imperceptible, differentiates the ordinary from the remarkable and maps out the blind spots of perception. It takes shape on the basis of impersonal percepts and works on experience at a sub-sensory level (Bonnet 2015). From this point of view, ambiance administers the order of the sensory and plays a part in its sharing.

On the other hand, an ambiance imprints its style on those experiencing it. In the grip of an ambiance bodies are activated, memorizing “ghost gestures” (Behnke 1997), qualities of motion and elementary motor schemes formed by past experience and organizing our daily behaviour. Ambiance and body mutually conform and sustain one another, giving rise to “corpographies”, which constitute in some way the bodily imprint of an ambiance (Dultra Britto, Berenstein Jacques 2013). On this depends the plasticity of bodies and the processes setting the rhythm of common experience. In this respect gestures play a key role, giving bodily expression to the affective tonalities of the moment and sustaining over time ways of being together. Through their ability to adjust to the surroundings and modulate to suit the situation, they inhabit an ambiance while allowing it to inhabit them. Sensitive to phenomena of tropism and imitation, synonymy and contagion (Brennan 2004), they support, in a dual motion, the incorporation and incarnation of ambiance. Impregnation thus depends on a continuous process of familiarizing with a setting, transmitting and reinstating a shared style of existence. Reading the travelogues of Bruce Chatwin or Nicolas Bouvier, the anthropological accounts by Victor Segalen or François Laplantine, is more than sufficient to realize how much ambiances express and accompany ways of being together. They

enable us to feel the rhythmic variations of social life, prolong the various ways we tune into and out of our surroundings and configure what our senses may perceive. By infusing social worlds with their sensory content they contribute to an “ecology of modes of being” (Macé 2016; my transl.).

By securing the continuity of common experience ambiance contributes to the basic trust we have in the world as it is, as it appears and remains. On this depends the ontological security of each and every one of us, the (quasi-)certainty of finding the world as we left it the day before, without the need to question. Anthony Giddens (1994, 92) defined ontological security as “the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action”. In establishing a setting for habitual, familiar existence in a continuum, ambiance is a part of the existential basis which consolidates what we take for granted. In so doing it makes the world truly inhabitable. As Tellenbach (1968) has shown, the atmospheric contributes to founding and protecting trust. Courtright (2013) subsequently made the same point, proposing the term “existential trust” to qualify the atmospheric form of confidence which takes on the traits of a widespread, ambient, pervasive trust. But there are times when our sense of the dependability of our everyday surroundings falters. This is the case with certain forms of schizophrenia which involve a “loss of *natural self-evidence*” (Blankenburg 1971; my transl.), or with some catastrophes—natural disasters or terrorist attacks—which reveal the precarious nature of the everyday world, by making it suddenly unfamiliar. Ambiance thus plays a central part in upholding a familiar world which each of us can recognize.

4 THE UNOBTRUSIVE INFLUENCE OF THE AMBIENT

At the basis of any sensory experience, ambiance relates to a transverse order of reality which is all the more unnoticed for being omnipresent and evanescent, connecting to a logic of sensory flows, ways of being and common gestures. But, grounded at the core of experience, ambiance works on it from the inside, conditioning (capacity to sensify and immerse, depending on the medium), shaping (capacity to attune and animate, depending on the affect) and sharing experience (capacity to habituate and acclimatize, depending on the gesture). What is at stake here is the aptitude of ambiance to accompany and reinstate, from one day to the next, our ways of feeling, our manners of dwelling. Stated in these terms

ambiance proceeds from a radical empiricism which puts experience to the test in the sensory world, with regard to what it may bring into play, transform and become.

So recognizing the lesser existence of ambiance prompts us to look for signs of its action in its *modus operandi*, querying not so much what it is as on what it acts. What then of the powers of impregnation of ambiance? From ambiance as a lesser existence we move to the ambient as an unobtrusive, lasting influence, as the *modus operandi*, which consists in both situating, breathing life into and sparing the common. In his many works on Chinese thought, François Jullien has highlighted a pragmatic view of silent transformations which has more to do with efficiency than effectiveness, tends to put pregnancy in the place of presence and focuses more on transformation than on action. As he has explained all through his work (see, e.g., Jullien 1996, 2009, 2012), the ambient operates at the level of conditions, in a pervasive, infiltrating way, underpinned by disseminated, undifferentiated pregnancies. It should be clear that the powers of impregnation of ambiance relate to the silent transformations which imperceptibly leave their mark on humdrum situations and everyday experiences. So ambiance does not operate through narrow determinism or strict causality, rather as an unobtrusive influence. It proceeds by continuous accompaniment which infuses and steers experience, by “seconding the world” (Zaoui 2013; my transl.). At the very heart of sensibility ambiances demonstrate an aptitude for suggesting movement and incentivizing motor tendencies, activating past memories and triggering involuntary memory, laying out ways of being together and attuning social situations, inducing imaginaries and opening up new experiences. All these subterranean operations play a part in the “climatic pregnancy” of an ambiance (Augoyard 1979; my transl.). In this way it turns the world into a world under the influence, experience always being under the control of various forms of impregnation, which increase or diminish our power to act, and qualify lived-in environments by making them more or less familiar and hospitable.

A broad-brush summary of ambiance’s powers of impregnation reveals five key features: (1) we are dealing with the pervasive, multi-sensory influence of a singular, sensory environment; (2) this influence takes hold over time, durably and continuously; (3) it proceeds mainly at a corporeal and molecular level, usually going unnoticed; (4) this unobtrusive influence involves a specific mode of propagation, proceeding from one neighbouring body to the next, by contagion and imitation; and (5) this type of impregnation is fundamentally anonymous and impersonal in nature, with no clearly identifiable author.

But if it is so tricky to throw light on the powers of impregnation of ambiance, it is because they are conditional on a capacity for sensing subtle differences, perceiving tiny nuances. We must start by delving deep into the realm of hypersensitivity, which enlarges the field of perception and welcomes the power to let in affects. So sensibility becomes a faculty for capturing forces, opening up to a power as such (Grossman 2017). If there are such things as *powers* of impregnation of ambiance, we must look for them under the aegis of sensibility, always supposing that perception “is susceptible not to transform the real but to vary the relation we entertain with the latter and in so doing open up [further] possibilities” (Laplantine 2014, 8; my transl.).

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PART III

Subjects and Communities



Atmospheres and Memory: A Phenomenological Approach

Steffen Kluck

1 MEMORY AND ATMOSPHERES

During the past 30 years, scientific research concerning memories and remembrance has experienced significant impulses. Amongst these, the two most substantial advancements took place within the fields of (neuro-) psychology¹ and cultural studies (Assmann 1992). Pursuant to these scientific approaches, a focus was put on the ideologically shaped cultural and political handling of collective memories on the one hand (Hirst and Manier 2002, 37) as well as on the neurophysiological correlates of individual memory on the other (Piefke and Markowitsch 2010). The question what memories actually are though, that is, how they can be conceived phenomenologically (Graumann 2002; see generally Freud 1917 or Rapaport 1942 for other relevant psychoanalytic literature), was raised only infrequently. However, a thorough phenomenological research on memories as experiences promises to provide insights that could be of

¹For an autobiography that is worth reading on this issue, see Kandel (2006). Also see Welzer (2010).

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great relevance for certain fields of study. An example of this is the relationship between emotions and memories. While the connection between these two occurrences has been addressed numerous times (e.g., Reisberg and Heuer 2004; see again Rapaport 1942 for a psychoanalytic perspective on this matter), the discussion hardly ever went beyond the scope of dealing with single emotions as factors of influence, which were also taken into account only as in means of terms like “positive”, “neutral”, “negative”, and similar categories. In contrast, a profound phenomenological approach would not automatically treat emotions as single factors, at least not without enough substantiation; instead, it would draw attention to their occasionally holistic quality. A quite common characteristic of emotions is that they approach us as atmospheres. Hermann Schmitz correctly points out that there are “holistic-atmospherical emotions that cannot simply be split up between the conscious subject and his encountering objects, but that antecede a differentiation between these two sides as well as they are superordinate to them” (1969, 99). The aspect of emotions being more than merely specific, single occurrences has mostly been ignored by any scientific research on memory. Yet, Felix Krueger and Otto Friedrich Bollnow had already pointed towards the connection between complex-seeming² emotional experiences (like moods) and memories (Krueger 1928, 20; Bollnow 1956, 206). In the following, with recourse to (neo-)phenomenological categories, it will be examined to what extent memories are concerned with atmospheres or, respectively, with atmospheric experiences.

2 PROUST AND THE LOST TIME

One of the most prominent descriptions of a memory originates from Marcel Proust. In his epochal novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*, he explains how the protagonist remembers an episode of his early years through nothing but the taste of a particular cookie dipped into tea. This scene deserves an extensive explication because it provides relevant motives for a phenomenology of memory (concerning the content of memory) on the one hand as well as for a phenomenology of remembrance (concerning its processes) on the other.

² Similar to the train of thoughts followed in this chapter, Felix Krueger (1928) tried to capture the bare essentials of emotions through a conceptual approach.

Introductory, the protagonist notices the limits of a certain pattern of memory. He concludes that anything that he would “then have remembered about it would have been furnished me by voluntary memory, the memory of intelligency [...], and since the pictures which that kind of memory shows us of the past preserve nothing of the past itself [...], [i]t is a labor in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect [...]” (Proust 1913, 49–50). Therefore, two kinds of memory are distinguished: intellectual, intentional memory on the one hand and random, passive memory on the other, with only the latter apparently being vital and wholesome. This prominent literary example of a memory takes place in the light of a so-called dichotomy. The very moment the protagonist puts a tea-soaked cookie into his mouth, he gets overwhelmed by a specific memory. Based on Proust’s precise explication,³ five characteristics of his novel’s peculiar and crucial form of retentional experiencing can be emphasized, namely (a) unavailability, (b) the embodied grip, (c) an atmospheric-emotional trait, (d) intensity, and (e) explicability. In the following, these terms shall be explained through short quotations from Proust’s work.

The unavailability of memory in the sense of a producer as well as of memory as in means of the contents of the product has already been shown by the above-quoted inability of the mind to actually employ this sort of memory in a conscious and autarchic manner. But even in the depiction of the appearance of a memory, the protagonist points out that he is not the actual causer of the experience, but merely its transmitter. He explains to be “intent on the extraordinary changes that were taking place in me” (Proust 1913, 51) while at the same time emphasizing that he has “no suggestion of its origin” (Proust 1913, 51). He gets involved with the situation in a completely passive and unintended manner. When the memory finally begins to wear off, its unavailability once again becomes evident, since drinking another such cup of tea does not automatically bring forth the same result: “I drank a second mouthful, in which I find nothing

³ It is strongly advised though to not off-handedly take the poet at his word. In his novel, Proust basically uses a mode of introspection that shares significant similarities with the phenomenological method. Thus his text is of specific interest for the investigation in hand. Nevertheless, in the course of further thoughts, its actual phenomenological validity has to be evaluated. On the specific validity of Proust’s depictions, see Bollnow (1956, 200–201). For a basic overview of the problems of phenomenology with literary sources, see Kammler and Kluck (2008).

more than in the first, a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time for me to stop; the power of the drink seems to be diminishing” (Proust 1913, 51). For Proust, occurrence and content of the actual memory appear to be independent from the subject.

Right in the beginning, in the context of the so-called Madeleine-episode, the protagonist describes his involvement with the upcoming memory as being bodily gripping: “No sooner had the warm liquid, mixed with the crumbs of the cake, touched my palate than a shudder ran through my whole body and I stopped [...]. An exquisite pleasure invaded my senses [...]. [T]his new sensation had an effect on me that otherwise only love can evoke, filling me with a precious essence [...].” (Proust 1913, 51).⁴ During his second attempt to purposely bring out his memory of Combray, he again emphasizes this grip: “And then, for the second time, I clear an empty space in front of it. I place in position before it the still recent taste of that first mouthful, and I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting place and attempts to rise” (Proust 1913, 52). Without a doubt, these passages are influenced by Proust’s literary intentions; apparent though is also the dynamic component that the author stresses through his protagonist. How shall it be conceived? It stands to reason to read and understand the movement attributes—for example, stopping, invading, starting, rising—different from common parlance. Certainly, during the memory process, the protagonist does not actually move physically; in fact, he may even appear quite apathetic to a hypothetic observer. In his feelings though, that is, the experience for which Proust’s introspective perspective much likely aims, highly dynamic processes take place. The memory grips the protagonist immediately and also in a manner comprehensible for him, without any necessity of an also physical manifestation.

Still, aside from the event and its entire dynamics, it is also characteristic for the gripping aspect to appear emotional and atmospheric. In this sense, the protagonist says that an “exquisite pleasure” has arisen, “filling me with a precious essence” (Proust 1913, 51). His depictions of his memories of Combray—which, due to their sheer length, cannot be further elaborated in this chapter—also show an emotional-atmospheric streak that is situated within the contents of the memory perceived by the protagonist, who thus gets impregnated in advance with a mood that becomes more specified during his further preoccupation with the memory, finally

⁴This parallel to love matches Schmitz’s description of love as an atmospheric emotion (1993, 29–61).

reaching the status of a setting containing the actual, concrete memory, that is, the Combray he knew in his childhood.

Fourth, the specific intensity of the experience that is connected to the memory is striking in Proust's elucidation. The protagonist reflects on his experiences by using a phenomenological-like perspective: "And I begin to ask myself again what it could have been, this unknown state which brought with it no logical proof of its existence, but only the sense that it was a happy, a real state in whose presence the other states of consciousness vanished" (Proust 1913, 51). In contrast to an intellectual memory that can deliberately provide specific facts—for example, one's father's birthday—the Madeleine-memory contains an evident impression of reality that seems to consist of an extraordinary intensity of experience. In comparison, the intellectual memory or, respectively, the contents it provides, are "all dead" for Proust's protagonist (Proust 1913, 50).

Ultimately, attention has to be focused on the specific explicative accomplishments of memory emphasized by Proust himself. Several times he explains how details emerge gradually, explicating and disambiguating themselves despite an initially vague, emotional and not individuated beginning. An example of such an explication can be found in Proust's unfolding of the world of Combray through the words of the protagonist:

And once I had recognized the taste of the morsel of Madeleine [...], immediately the old grey house on the street, where her [his aunt's; S.K.] room was, rose up like the scenery of a theater to attach itself to the little pavilion, opening on to the garden, which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated panel which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house, the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I was sent before midday meal, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when weather was fine. [...] [S]o in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, spring into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea. (Proust 1913, 53–54)

By such means of explication, the holistic as well as complex-seeming beginning of the memory with its atmospheric character gradually evolves into a rich structure characterized by its details. Or, to put it the other way around: At first, that which is remembered is contained only implicitly and only over time emerges onto the surface. This appears to be one of the differences between this form of memory and its intellectual counterpart.

Thus, taking Proust's explications as a basis, memory turns out to be *a partially unavailable, not intentionally causable incident that bodily grips a human, displays itself through bodily perceptible dynamics, possesses atmospheric qualities, possibly features a distinct qualitative intensity, and initially appears holistic while only bringing along details as implicit components that first need to be explicated*. Bollnow's analysis of the Madeleine-scene already emphasized that this description applies to basic facts of the memory (1956, 200–219). He also highlights that the decisive factor of the epos' content lies in the circumstance that "the search for lost time [...] can not at all be deliberately enforced through struggles of one's free will" (Bollnow 1956, 202), while it is also based on an emotional-atmospheric foundation: "The content of this memory solely depends on the commonality of this indefinite mood that assembles the multitude of the ambient circumstances to a unified whole at any given moment in one's life" (1956, 206). The content consists of the mood, which—be it as a whole or as a complex gestalt—holds together its extractable single explicata.

If following this analysis, two dimensions of the atmospheric can be distinguished in the context of memory. On the one hand, memory as the process of re-emerging past episodes⁵ has to be made a subject of discussion as in means of its actual mode of appearance. On the other hand, the question has to be raised how atmospheres emerge as content of a memory, namely in the context of an embodied grip. So far, in the context of this initial approach to the issue as a whole, both aspects have been left together. Nevertheless, a more precise examination requires a distinction concerning this matter. Proust's description indicates five different traits that seem to be in need of a phenomenological illumination. Drawing on the concepts of new phenomenology, a conceptual reconstruction of the events during the Madeleine-episode shall be attempted in the following.

3 NEOPHENOMENOLOGICAL THEORIES OF ATMOSPHERES

The origin of neophenomenological theories of atmospheres is the observation that certain experiences that can be referred to as "spatial" in the broadest sense cannot be subsumed under the common categories of space. While the spatial structure of a particular room in a particular house can be well displayed through Cartesian concepts, this does not apply to other

⁵While the possibility that this process may also lead to fallacies is not put into question, it does not hold any relevance to the problem of the atmospheric discussed here.

aspects of lifeworld-experience. In this regard, Schmitz points to the atmosphere of silence as one example among others (Schmitz 1969, 201–208; Hauskeller 1995, 106–110). It has a specific spatial characteristic that cannot be captured by Cartesian categories though. Based on this obvious phenomenal observation, Schmitz describes the bare essentials of the spatiality of atmospheres as follows: “I refer to *atmosphere* as the occupation of felt presence. [...] This does not refer to remote spaces, but to those spaces that one experiences as present and being filled with e.g. emotions like joy, sorrow, anger, shame, fear, courage, compassion, contentment” (Schmitz 2014, 30; see also Böhme 1995, 30). If thus understood as “a complete or partial, in any case a comprehensive occupation of a surfaceless space within the range of that which is experienced as present” (Schmitz 2014, 19), the weather (in respect of its spatiality) can be seen as an example of an atmosphere. The “space of the weather” surrounds “the sensitive human with a loosely filled vastness, for instance [...], when stepping outside a stuffy room” (Schmitz 2014, 31). Though Schmitz’s phenomenological theory of space cannot be examined in extenso here, it should have become apparent that atmospheres are impressive as specific phenomena especially because they impress with a spatial vastness that has nothing to do with conventional categories of space. Humans encounter atmospheres as obvious phenomena with a very distinctive spatiality. In this sense, they occupy a space, but not the one that is usually believed to be the actual space, namely the Cartesian “everyday space”.

Quite frequently, atmospheres approach us as emotions. Admittedly, non-emotional atmospheres exist as well, but they shall not be taken into account here. Schmitz defines emotions as “bodily moving forces poured out spatially” (Schmitz 2014, 30). As atmospheres, emotions are characterized by their above mentioned experienced spatiality, affecting humans in a specific manner. The term “(felt) body”—as well as “bodily” and “embodied” as its corresponding adverb and adjective—refers to the specific “resonance point” (Schmitz 2014, 9), where atmospheres or, respectively, emotions interact with the human, that is, have an impact on him. It is important to clearly distinguish between “(felt) body” on the one hand and “body” and “soul” on the other. Schmitz uses “(felt) body” as a terminological alternative for “body” and “soul” that refers “to the epitome of anything that a human being can feel as belonging to himself in the region—not always within the boundaries—of his body, without resorting to the five senses taste, sight, touch, smell, and sound [...]” (Schmitz 2014, 16; concerning the felt-body, see also Schmitz 2011). It is about a

specific feeling or perception of oneself that is not just the reverse side of physiological processes, but that in fact constitutes a distinctive, irreducible, and—in Schmitz’s opinion—fundamental universe of discourse. One example of this is an ankle that has swollen after a sports injury: Its embodied spatiality is not identical with the concrete, physically manifesting alteration. The felt body possesses its own genuine characteristics that make it clearly distinguishable from the body. Exemplary for this is the felt body’s structure resembling a set of islands—the felt body is composed of many islands that are not constantly connected to each other, while the connection of the physical body’s parts is permanent (Schmitz 1990, 19–21). While one can create a continuous stimulation on his skin, for example, by caressing his left arm with his right hand, there is nothing similar in the case of the felt body. It is the felt body though that gets affected by emotions and reacts to them, without the necessity of an also physical manifestation. The specific reactions that are substantial for embodied affective involvement show independent dynamics that Schmitz calls “embodied communication”.⁶ A more in-depth investigation on the processes of affective involvement has to be omitted here though.

Regarding emotions, Schmitz distinguishes three layers:

The basic layer is composed of the pure moods; with their sheer width, they provide a foundation for all other emotions. There are two pure moods: contentment and despair. [...] The second layer is composed of the pure excitements; these are emotions whose atmosphere is imbued with directionality, but not centered on topics. Among these are joy and sadness, anxiousness and desire, discontent and distrust, which look for an occasion to emerge, and apprehensive expectation. The third layer is composed of thematically centered emotions, in which the directed stirrings are concentrated around one topic. (Schmitz 2014, 22)

Regarding moods, this differentiation has also been used by Martin Heidegger (1927, 172–179), Bollnow (1956, 34–35), and, most recently, by Matthew Ratcliffe (2008, 41–75) and Angelika Krebs (2017, 1421). It draws on the phenomenally accessible determinations of experience. Moods do not relate to objects, while some emotions very well have eminent fixpoints. Even object-related emotions possess an atmospheric character, which only is not quite as striking. Such an internal structure of emotions allows for making their emergence a subject of discussion even

⁶For an overview on this subject, see Schmitz (1990, 135–153).

in cases where this cannot be achieved by the common access that focuses on concrete, object-related singular emotions. Especially moods as atmospheric emotions, as understood by Schmitz, provide a large potential for future research.

This cursory insight into the neophenomenological theories of atmospheres shows how atmospheres are specific phenomena that affect the bodily constituted human. But what does this have to do with memory? In Schmitz's theory, phenomena of memory as well as phenomena of remembrance so far appear only in a different context. Aside from the theory of the felt body and the theory of atmospheres, Schmitz has also dealt intensively with the concept of situation. Situations are ontologically fundamental entities that can be characterized by the fact that their contents do not yet exist individually within them, but rather are chaotically manifold as well as diffuse (see Schmitz 1990, 65–79; Großheim 2002, 279–300). An example of this can be seen in the situation of grocery shopping in a supermarket—while parts of this situation may be propositionally explicit (“I want to be the products x, y, and z.”), many other aspects do not at all become apparent as single issues. For example, the implicit expectation that the grocery clerk is dressed and not naked may be part of the situation; nevertheless, we never bear this in mind explicitly (with the possible exception of certain very peculiar occurrences). Schmitz uses this broad ontological concept of situation to grasp memory and oblivion (Schmitz 1998, 190–213). Memory is a more or less distinct isolated situation, that is, split up into constellations to which the bearer of the memory can relate. Oblivion, on the other hand, is “no loss, but a change of the type of manifoldness by means of melting down into chaotic manifoldness” (Schmitz 1998, 201; see the interesting parallel in Hirst and Manier 2002, 47). This interpretation of memory and oblivion as a change of manifoldness has the advantage that it can explain memory itself as well as the extraction of single parts from it. It is apparent though that Schmitz has not actually focused on memories in terms of how they are in conjunction with atmospheres. His engagement in retentional experiencing stays focused on concepts of situation as well as on concepts of person.

Nevertheless, extending beyond Schmitz's findings, certain conclusions can also be drawn for the subject in hand. *Firstly*, it needs to be emphasized that quite often (though not always) a co-occurrence of atmospheres and situations can be observed (see Schmitz 2014, 50, 55, 60).⁷ The atmosphere then turns out to be linked to certain situations, being evoked in

⁷For a critical view on the issue, cf. Griffero (2010, 31–36).

case of their recurrence. *Secondly*, it becomes apparent that atmospheres are bodily gripping forces, thus possibly becoming noticeable for the human within the scope of his experienced frame of mind through certain dynamic processes (in this respect, Schmitz speaks of contraction and expansion, encorporation and excorporation). “The affective involvement of emotions thus has a strained, dialogic-dynamic character in which the feeling is not a state, but rather the opponent of the one involved” (Schmitz 1969, 144). In this regard, Gernot Böhme draws a line of development from Ludwig Klages to new phenomenology as they both emphasize the active role of the atmosphere as an extrinsically approaching instance of emotion (Böhme 1995, 29). *Thirdly*, in the respective contexts of the theory of atmospheres and the concept of situation, Schmitz pursues an ontological objective to emphasize the priority of completeness over any individual part. Atmospheres, for instance, strike us especially due to their frequent opacity, only disclosing details of their actual nature after thorough reflection. Situations, on the other hand, are chaotic manifoldnesses that can only be disassembled into constellations of single factors by means of an explication. *Fourthly*, atmospheres often bear an emotional characteristic, which, according to Schmitz, brings forth a certain kind of being gripped. As Schmitz puts it, the “feature distinguishing emotions from other atmospheres within the space of felt presence that are not emotions [...] lies in the way the grip evolves: If the grip is real, the one being gripped first has to solidarize with the emotion, integrating it into his own vital drive. Only then can he undertake a personal way of dealing with the emotion by giving in to or resisting it. [...] This provisory frailness of the one being gripped concerning his emotion is missing entirely in case of the totally poured out atmospheres that are not emotions” (Schmitz 2014, 37). *Fifthly*, in consequence to the before mentioned, it can be concluded that atmospheres do not necessarily have to be bound to objects, but that they can rather preserve a certain degree of independence. As an examination of moods particularly reveals, atmospheres are phenomena that “lie before the divide between subject and world” (Krebs 2017, 1424).

Based on the concept of new phenomenology explained above in extracts, an interpretation of memory in accordance to Proust’s description of the Madeleine-scene shall now be attempted. The idea behind this hermeneutic procedure is to show that the experiencing process of the protagonist can be phenomenologically decoded, with the role of the atmospheric phenomena becoming apparent.

4 READING PROUST PHENOMENOLOGICALLY

At the beginning, five characteristics of specific, not intellectual memory within the Madeleine-scene had been highlighted: unavailability, embodied grip, an atmospheric-emotional trait, intensity, and explicability. The hypothesis guiding the following passage states that these characteristics can be explained phenomenologically. Initially brought to attention will be the unavailability. It is characterized by the fact that the mind does not have any direct influence on the occurrence of a memory even if it desperately wishes to remember something. In other words: The mind can intend to remember something, but it cannot cause the actual occurrence of the specific memory. In this manner Proust distinguished intellectual memory from “real”, “actual” memory. But why does the mind fail in this matter? To say it with Schmitz, not atmospheres themselves, but only the conditions for their occurrence can actually be “created”—thus one can only try to capture them by setting up the most suitable circumstances (Schmitz 2003, 243–261; Böhme 1995, 30–31 objected to this assumption). Obviously, in this regard we find an obvious point of contact between atmospheres and memory. This can be interpreted in two ways—either memory as content is an atmosphere or memory is a situation. If the former is correct (phenomenally, this occasionally seems to be the case), then it is possible to wish for the memory’s occurrence, but it does not solely depend on the subject. In a similar fashion, one can wish to be gripped by joy in the light of certain events, but he cannot actually enforce it. On this issue, Bollnow, in spite of a more epistemological focus, wrote accurately: “So there are [...] certain insights that a human, regardless of how much effort he puts into it, cannot enforce intentionally, but that only ‘dawn’ on him under certain sufficient circumstances” (1956, 57). In this sense it has to be said that Proust’s protagonist experiences a memory as not readily available, because on the one hand it is itself an autarchic force beyond his control, while on the other hand memory also requires a certain basic mood. The described attempts to willingly evoke the reminiscence of Combray once again can be regarded as such an attunement. The second option, marking memories as situations, immediately suggests itself since situations are no things readily available to humans either, but rather (partially withdrawn⁸) objects usable for explications. This interpre-

⁸ The “withdrawal” is a consequence of situations never being completely apprehensible through constellations that result from an explication.

tation of the unavailability is possible in the light of Schmitz's implementations. Still, in Proust's work, it does not attain as much support as the other variant. At any rate though, the pejorative intellectual memory indicates a constellation-based, explicative access that obviously cannot be obtained through "real" memory.⁹ Maybe the parallel becomes more obvious by addressing Schmitz's differentiation between memory and remembrance: "Remembrance differs from memories [...] in that its contents can usually be mobilized arbitrarily while memories require that they simply come to mind" (Schmitz 1998, 206). Therefore, the situational element would have to be assigned to the "actual" memory in Proust's sense.

Concerning someone's being gripped, which, in Proust's text, presented itself through certain dynamics, it was evident that it could not be conceived in a primarily physical sense. Instead, based on Schmitz's findings, the embodiment of the occurrence can be assumed. In other words, the events experienced by the protagonist in and among himself are to be regarded as an expression of embodied occurrence in Schmitz's (and also in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's¹⁰) sense. Memory as the content of an experience then affects a human as a fellow player in bodily communication in the same way as other phenomena (e.g., the words of the counterpart in a debate, the emotions in the presence of a perceived injustice). Therefore, when the protagonist explains the dynamic processes he observes in the moment he gets struck by the memory, he actually refers to his own bodily feeling. The neophenomenological vocabulary also makes it possible to comprehensibly explain what takes place when a remembrance (in this case referring to the production of memories) takes place. Schmitz claims: "To search for a memory is an act of the felt body [...]" (Schmitz 1998, 206). Proust's protagonist explains how he attempts to search for a specific memory and then notices how something within him slowly rises to the surface (Proust 1913, 52). This can be seen as a description of the bodily dynamics of the procedural memory.

Regarding the third trait, the atmospheric-emotional character of memory, some of the already achieved findings can be repeated. The atmospheric part of this appears to be based mainly on the memory and its contents often being atmospheres. In this sense, many memories even

⁹ As an alternative access that is not primarily based on constellations, Schmitz offers the theory of hermeneutic intelligence. On this issue, see Schmitz (2010, 86–87).

¹⁰ For an insight on the parallels of the respective philosophy of the felt body of Merleau-Ponty and Schmitz, see Kluck (2014, 87–88).

appear to be primarily atmospheric, for instance when one, as in the case of Proust's protagonist, is reminiscent of his own "atmospheres of growing up" (Wolf 2015). The particular aspects that thus become evident—namely the aunt's house, the park, the church and so on—are only comprehensible in the context of a mood-based embeddedness. Krueger had already emphasized such a correlation in his analysis of emotions, stating that it can be seen everywhere that "in a passage of time, memories first separate themselves from a diffuse directionality of emotions and then, secondly, they always remain functionally controlled by it; by any means, they consistently stay more or less closely embedded in something emotional that, so to speak, fills the 'gaps' of the entire contents of experience and provides the 'background' for anything that possibly stands out" (Krueger 1928, 20–21). On that note, single memories remain dependent on a mood-based and thus generally atmospheric background. Scientific research in the fields of psychoanalysis and experimental psychology seems to underline this embeddedness-trait as well (Rapaport 1942, 135, 268). Based on Schmitz's findings, it can be assumed that moods may be a fundamental object of memory. This would also touch on the close connection between atmospheres (with moods being an instance of atmospheres) and situations. If moods can be regarded as background memories, it is—as Krueger points out—also because of particular remembered aspects emerging from them. Thereby, moods would accomplish what in Schmitz's eyes gets accomplished by situations. An actual identity of situations and atmospheres—at is has been proposed by Tonino Griffero—would thus find significant backup (2010, 31–36).

Proust's protagonist further emphasizes that "true" memories are more intense compared to intellectual memories. Phenomenologically spoken, this results from the affective involvement, which is the actual reason why encounters actually involve a human at all: "The affective involvement is the involvement of a subject in bodily stirrings and emotions that thus become the subject's own, bringing along the nuance of affecting him deeply" (Schmitz 1969, 138). It is the reason why humans (and animals) can get involved by something, while this is impossible for machines, since they lack a bodily constitution. Schmitz uses this differentiation concerning involvement to further stress that "the content of the remembrance is more neutral than the material of the memory; it does not rely so much on subjectivity for its bearer" (Schmitz 1998, 207). Thus, memory must correlate with involvement. The protagonist seems to suffer from a shortage of such a correlation, because his endeavour to regain the "lost time" may consist precisely of such a resubjectivization.

Lastly, some light needs to be shed on the explicative moment. To say it with Schmitz, “explication is an isolation of circumstances, programs, and problems resulting from chaotic manifoldness, thus being equivalent to an individuation of this chaotic manifoldness itself” (1990, 68). As already mentioned, his aim is to show that an entity that so far has not been solidly structured, that is, the chaotic manifoldness, becomes a well-arranged structure through a process of individuation, a so-called constellation. This process takes place both on the part of the subject, as it attaches hermeneutic anticipations of most different origin to the things, and on the part of the object, as it increases or decreases the likeliness of specific explications to come into action by alternatively allowing them, denying them and so on. In this respect, memories are paradigmatic insofar remembrance is assumed to be a change in manifoldness during which single instances can be gradually, but not arbitrarily extracted from a structureless holistic complex. This was distinctly shown in the elaboration of the protagonist’s memories of Combray in the course of the unfolding described by Proust. This motif suggests understanding the memory as a situation that serves as a basis for further explication (which is exactly the way Schmitz 2002, 153–156, interpreted memory). Nevertheless, atmospheres of experience occasionally have to be characterized as in a way “situational” because only over time do they reveal characteristics. Often, the approach of an atmosphere is initially holistic, namely when one gets afflicted by an “oppressive mood” from which he gains certain single facts and circumstances and so on only in the course of time.

Irrespective of Schmitz’s not ultimately clarified comprehension of the relationship between atmosphere and situation, the explication-theorem allows to elucidate why one’s personal history is of significance for memories. Explications are attempts of comprehension that humans use for situations, with the latter being the primary objects of the lifeworld. At this, their hermeneutic anticipations, their epistemological interest is largely determined by their “stories”. Wilhelm Schapp underlines: “The place of origin where we encounter love and hatred, joy and sorrow and all so-called emotional stirrings is constituted by the stories that involve us in the role of us or me [...]” (1953, 149). Likewise, recent psychological research has confirmed this position: “The socioculturally shaped structures of meaning and signification of memories cannot be understood without paying attention to their often storylike form. To a large degree, memories are part of the narrative mode of human thinking” (Kölbl and Straub 2010, 25). According to this, memories in the capacity of either material

or determinants of explication have to be viewed in the context of narrative processes. Proust's narration makes this quite obvious as does already the structure of the epos insofar the depicted Madeleine-scene is only remembered by the protagonist at the end of its storyline because he realizes how essential this memory is to him, which in turn causes him to write the novel that ultimately includes the Madeleine-scene.

5 PERSPECTIVES

What is the hereby presented interpretation of the Madeleine-scene capable to achieve? The idea was to demonstrate that the vocabulary of new phenomenology can shed some light on what is experienced during the process of remembrance. Proceeding from Proust's complex description, the most relevant characteristics were explained using philosophical theorems and terms. Regarding the central question of the connection between the atmospheric and remembrance it was shown that atmospheres can be located on the object's side—within the memory—as well as (though initially less obvious) in the process of remembrance. It remains to be said though that Schmitz considers the atmospheric element to be of far less relevance for the remembrance as compared to the situational element. Thus, further research is necessary in order to clarify how the interaction of these two elements can be apprehended.

Not mentioned here, but most certainly a promising task is an analysis of the sensual processes of remembrance through an approach within the field of phenomenology of perception. Proust's text offers several indications for the relevance of such an investigation. It is not a coincidence that the protagonist gets struck by a memory due to a gustatory impression. Besides smell, taste is widely acknowledged as a particularly memory-triggering phenomenon. Why is this the case? The answer to this question requires a thorough analysis of the phenomenal characteristics of several sensory modalities. Schmitz (1978) has already provided quite some papers on this matter. It shall be noted here that smell itself presents a "holistic world" (Hauskeller 1995, 90) and thus is already quite close to its evoking elements—mood, atmosphere, or situation—in accordance with its phenomenal characteristics. At any rate, the idea that an investigation on memory cannot be conducted without regard to certain classes of phenomena that are each specific in their respective manner, emerges as a research hypothesis.

A question that has been quite dominant among scientific studies concerning memory, namely how collective memories and collective remembrance have to be conceived, has also been completely omitted in this chapter. Proust's protagonist of the Madeleine-scene remains secluded, even though cultural and social influences could most likely be detected easily. In this respect, the concept of situation could provide opportunities for further research since Schmitz knows "common situations"¹¹ involving whole groups of people. In the context of such a joint situation, remembrance would easily become comprehensible as featuring a collective trait. Also, based on Schmitz's comprehension of atmospheres as entities not tied to objects, it can be shown how determining atmospheric occurrences arise (Schmitz 2014, 50–64; see also Großheim et al. 2014). In this respect, direct points of attachment exist between a phenomenology of remembrance and the research on memory, especially in the field of cultural studies.

Overall, memory proves to be accessible through a phenomenological analysis. The terms of new phenomenology were able to show what takes place within the context of memory processes. It also became apparent that atmospheres play a role both as content and as trait of these processes. Nevertheless, the relationship of the atmospheric elements of memory and remembrance to the situational element still requires further enlightenment.

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¹¹ On collective situations, see Schmitz (1990, 74–77, 417–420).

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Atmospheres of Learning, Atmospheric Competence

Barbara Wolf

1 INTRODUCTION

The knowledge of prerequisites, conditions, and limitations of pedagogical acting has been reduced on curricula, instructional methods, and principles of teaching for a long time. These instruments seem to allow for a complete calculability of teaching lessons. Beforehand, the educationalists Johann Friedrich Herbart (1964) and Jakob Muth (1967) had already discovered the fact that educational situations are marked by unavailability and unpredictability because of the great variability of human interaction. Pupils and teachers do not always act according to their particular social roles. A teacher may be stressed, exhausted, or ill and thus cannot inspire the students. Likewise, the pupils may be unmotivated, tired, or aggressive and neither listen to the teacher nor concentrate on the subject. The internally diffuse meaningfulness of collective situations in a classroom creates a lot of incidents, conflicts, and misunderstandings. Niklas Luhmann (2002, 55) calls this correlation “double contingency” between teacher and learner because there is an uncertainty how the counterpart will act. The sociologist Friedrich Tenbruck goes as far as speaking of *incertainty as a conditio humana* that causes a handling of the

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“inner action” (1972, 77). This chapter illuminates the concept of *atmospheres in an educational context*, a rarely noticed phenomenon even though it has a major influence on the *common situation* in a classroom. At first, it defines how the term “atmospheres” is used in phenomenological and pedagogical contexts. Secondly, typical atmospheres in educational contexts are described. Thirdly, some practical class examples illustrate the significance of atmospheres in the classroom. Fourthly, it demonstrates what effect atmospheres can have on the embodied disposition. Subsequently, the influence on atmospheres and on ways to create desirable pedagogical atmospheres is shown. Lastly, the necessity of an atmospheric competence is demonstrated.

2 THE TERM “ATMOSPHERE” IN A PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT

In everyday life, almost everyone talks about atmospheres: the nice atmosphere of a cosy room in kindergarten, the tense atmosphere of a teacher’s conference. We can experience and describe atmospheres, but it is difficult to define them (Griffero 2010, 2). Atmospheres are experienced sensually, they are not solid or continuous, and they cannot be explicated in a purely cognitive way. Griffero speaks of an “atmospheric perception” that can be characterized as a “holistic and emotional being-in-the-world” (Griffero 2010, 34). Hermann Schmitz even dared to tackle with the difficult subject of nebulous atmospheres. He defines them as spatial phenomena, “coming upon us from a boundless amplexity” or as “a background of our embodied condition surrounding us involuntary and instinctively” (Schmitz 1990, 292; my translation). In his eyes, atmospheres more or less overwhelm human beings, thus affecting their mood. Gernot Böhme designates them as rooms of implicit moods that can be influenced intentionally. People influence atmospheres by “their behaviour, their manner of speaking, gesture, appearance, by the pure embodied presence, the voice, and much more” (Böhme 2013, 38; my translation). While Schmitz emphasizes the pathic side of atmospheres and Böhme the influenceable, the educationalist Otto Friedrich Bollnow focuses on the relationship between teacher and pupil. He describes atmospheres as “the whole felt conditions and human actions, taking place between educator and child, constituting the background of every pedagogical behaviour” (Bollnow 1964, 11; my translation).

The study *Atmosphären des Aufwachsens* (“Atmospheres of Growing Up”) examines two different components of atmospheres in educational institutions: spatial aspects on the one hand, and personal aspects on the other (Wolf 2015, 8). The former include qualities like colour, light, proportion, material, temperature, and furniture, while the latter involve personal qualities like friendliness, perfectionism, patience, humour, and aggression. These atmospheric conditions can be separated only analytically because the different aspects arise from a multiple and chaotic state of things in a collective situation that can hardly be explicated as single facts. Tenbruck speaks of the possibility of attributing affective qualities to everyday objects. Thereby, objects transform into potential players in the game of learning (Tenbruck 1972, 88). The external perception of the object merges with being touched by it in one’s felt body. Knowing such correlations between learning subject and felt qualities of emotional attachment may be useful for the design of the learning process because they create an atmosphere that seems to have a certain influence on the subject. All definitions mentioned above include the fact that people experience a certain situation here and now that confronts them not only by measurable factors but also by sensible experiences.

3 ATMOSPHERES IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Teachers aim to step into resonance with pupils, for example, an interrelation between educator and child developing mutual affecting and answering (Rosa 2016, 298). During the interaction, both parties experience a transformation of their respective perspective on the shared subject. The living social relationship causes the participants to move forward, getting carried away from the joint activity, and making new learning experiences (Rosa and Endres 2016, 30). These processes are initiated not only by abstract-rational signs, but also by perception. An atmosphere affects me because its qualities concern me in a way that is able to change my mind. Atmospheric perception means being involved by things; it is a kinaesthetic, synesthetic and polymodal, emotional, and holistic way of being-in-the-world (Griffero 2010, 32). Jürgen Hasse expresses this phenomenon as a manner to connect life-world-experience with scientific constructions in a way that corresponds with reality, in this case with everyday school life (Hasse 2015, 121).

Unfortunately though, pupils are not inspired all the time, not in mutual incorporation with the subject matter. The phenomenon of incorporation describes a particular focus on the counterpart that influences the interaction of partners in two different ways (Schmitz 1990, 151). In solidary incorporation, the attendants resonate in a certain rhythm, for example, in a communal action like drumming, dancing, or making a Laola-Wave. Antagonistic incorporation negotiates between the subordination and superiority of the social relationship. Who sets the agenda in the classroom? Who stays in the background? This claim to power is an anthropological constant that the social partners have to negotiate vocally, through body posture, or simply in exchanging glances. In a conversation, power fluctuates between the different protagonists. The dominance is characterized by contraction of the felt body, which is tangible as a contracting musculature, tensured posture, or a firm expression. The power develops through the intensity of being contracted (Wolf 2017, 543). If a teacher wants to assign a special task, he has to raise his voice, fine-tune his body tension, and watch the class with a straight look that also needs contraction. In contrast, the pupil has to receive the message in an attitude of expansion that is characterized by relaxation and openness. The success of a conversation depends on the listener because his attention, regard, and openness allow for further verbal and embodied exchange (Schmitz 2011, 41). After listening, he sends a new message that can be driven back and forth like a ball of contraction between the dialogue partners. The intonation is able to change the meaning of spoken words, for example, epicritic (such as bright and shrill) qualities on the one hand, and protopathic qualities (like dark or subdued) on the other (Schmitz 1990, 143). The present persons create moods that compose the actual atmosphere in the room. “It may happen, that [...] the entry of a person will generate an atmosphere in a room that could make people freeze into ice as well as feeling warm, relaxed, and friendly, or in another way” (Schmitz 1990, 149; my translation).

Such subtle processes create pedagogical atmospheres that influence a student’s learning process. The mutual concentration on the counterpart is generated by facial expression, symbols, gestures, and posture in the common situation of pupils and teachers. Moods like respect, devaluation, or ignorance reflect—together with spatial effects—the collective atmosphere like a holistic surrounding. In the following, some typical examples of educational atmospheres are shown.

4 TYPICAL ATMOSPHERES IN THE CLASSROOM

The atmosphere in a classroom is composed of very different influence factors, such as a typical daily routine, number of pupils, noise level, illumination, pressure to perform, competition, feeling of security, acceptance, or inspiration (Wolf 2017, 538). Those atmospheric influence factors, which I refer to as “atmospheres of growing up”, may have a substantial impact on children’s socialization (Wolf 2015, 3).

Atmospheres are perceived by the felt body. The term “felt body” describes everything that can be felt by someone as a part of himself in the area of the physical body without using the five senses—sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste (Schmitz 2014, 16). Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Thomas Fuchs consider it an integral element of the perceiving subject and its interaction with the environment (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 400; Fuchs 2013, 99). Atmospheres at school affect the felt body as a whole and influence the experience of mental states.

On the one hand, we can describe and consider atmospheres from a spatial perspective within the meaning of interior design and spatial perception. The main focus in this respect is on aspects like the colour of the wall paint, room temperature, and light conditions as well as used materials, such as wood, concrete, marble, textiles, and glass (Hasse 2015, 217). These qualities create atmospheres that are perceived in a pathic manner and influence the subjective affective involvement of people. It makes a difference whether a classroom is bright, spacious, clearly structured, and cosy or whether it is dark, narrow, chaotic, and uncomfortable.

A good learning atmosphere has to be adjusted to the effect that feelings that encourage learning motivation, curiosity, and safety are supported. The classroom offers qualities of coldness, warmth, swing, or rigidity by different suggestions of motion. Objects indicate different motions simply through their form and cause subjects to act according to the bridging qualities of these impressions. Spatial arrangements may create corresponding feelings, for instance, a shelf will suggest openness and transparency, while a concrete wall conveys an impression of indestructibility and firmness. Architectural atmospheres may have a contracting or an expansive effect (Julmi 2015, 205) that pathemically modulates the pericorporal space of the observer and thereby influences students’ and teachers’ moods. The stature of things conveys a certain inner sense (Schmitz 2014, 67). But the subject will also derive certain affective expectations from the object he is concerned with (Tenbruck 1972, 87).

Bridging qualities of objects that can be experienced by the felt body, like the spiny hairs of a cactus or the softness of a cushion affect a room's atmosphere (Schmitz 2014, 28). Moreover, indoor plants and natural light create a different atmosphere in the classroom than grey walls and neon lamps.

Additionally, atmospheres also arise from persons and their behaviour towards others. Since school is a competitive system, antagonistic incorporation is often more important than solidary incorporation. The main tasks of the school system in a sociological sense are education, comparison, and selection (Luhmann 2002, 66). The educational relationship is characterized not by particular and personal qualities, but by reasonable and functional attitudes (Schweizer 2007, 98). Teachers have to grade and evaluate students and are bound to compare their performances. Those conditions create an atmosphere of competition and rivalry. The "memory of the system" stores the information "good student" or "bad student" (Luhmann 2002, 66) and possibly reduces the teacher-pupil relation to an either-or-decision. From a phenomenological perspective, these specific conditions lead to the results described below.

Successful students experience an expansion of their felt body because good scores have an important influence on opportunities in an individual's future life. But this is only the final consequence, which is preceded by others. First, successful students have mutual antagonistic incorporation with teachers, other students, and parents. Because they speak faster, gesticulate more vehemently, and capture the pole of contraction as an attitude of dominance, they succeed in the competition of learning. Certainly intellectual abilities play an important role in school success, but so do embodied self-competences like sitting still, waiting to be called, catching attention, and so on. Successful students feel self-effective, competent, and respected by adults and children alike. Weaker pupils though feel contraction and shame due to their inferior school performance. They become emotionally paralysed, unable to make progress. Negative moods resonate within their islands of the felt body, such as chest pain, red cheeks, dry mouth, or trembling in fear (Schmitz 1990, 119). They experience themselves as inefficient and inferior. Critical remarks on poor school performances are a heavy and depressing burden.

Atmospheres do not only affect a single person but also a whole group of pupils in a school class. They are called *collective atmospheres* (Schmitz 2014, 56) and arise from the unique ambiance as the sum of individual feelings and moods in a classroom as well as from the general climate of a

school. The educational system may guarantee a membership of a particular social group, but it can also be a place of imposition, humiliation, and bullying (Grundmann 2009, 180). Bullying is marked by embodied signals that make children feel ashamed, ignored, or unwanted (Belkacem 2012, 16). Seemingly harmless gestures like rolling one's eyes or signs behind someone's back discriminate others. The individual victim feels helpless, suppressed, and isolated. It begins to believe that there is something wrong with it because the majority seems to agree that it is not part of the group. Bullying is caused by collective atmospheres that make the underdog feel contracted and excluded from the common situation of the class. Through antagonistic incorporation, pupils consider who is in a superior position and who is in an inferior one. The superior group acts as if it was fun for all participants. However, the crucial factor concerning bullying is what the victim feels in the particular situation, for example, shame, discrimination, or isolation (Jannan 2010, 15). "The troubled heart, the tightness in the chest, the face flushed with warmth, the trembling of the hands, the strange feeling in the stomach can only be perceived by the person concerned" (Wolf 2016, 197; my translation). This atmosphere of anxiety and suppression results in the exclusion and isolation of the pupil instead of a feeling of belonging and acceptance. Such negative sentiments put pupils into terrible states of fear up to serious traumatic experiences.

A trauma can be described as an embodied affective involvement paralyzing the vital drive in a way that strongly decreases the vibrational ability between contraction and expansion (Wolf 2017, 548). The variance of experience and the ability to respond are massively reduced (Langewitz 2010, 157). This overwhelming affective involvement leads to a state of primitive present in which the whole situation resolves in fear, stiffness, and contraction (Schmitz 1990, 153). All concepts of coping with future challenges fail because the student is caught up by the negative atmosphere. In traumatic experiences, a person is not able to get out of the state of shock by himself because the massive contraction affects certain islands of the felt body that solidify and remind the subject of the embodied pain or sorrow. Wolf Langewitz emphasizes the necessity to help these children by giving them the possibility to express their strange feelings through verbal images to a person of trust in order to resolve the rigid embodied affects (Langewitz 2010, 159).

In summary, one can say that atmospheres in a classroom are easy to observe. They are formed by spatial aspects as well as by the persons involved. A dark lightning, a musty smell, or a chaotic room design create

a certain atmosphere. A serious facial expression, a tense posture, or a relaxed mood are perceptible as suggestions of motion. They are noticeable as embodied contraction and expansion and are connected with meanings of fear, trepidation, or well-being (Schultheis 2008, 102). Those atmospheres of growing up have a significant impact on children's development. Therefore, it is important to discuss how they may be influenced by pedagogues in a positive way.

5 ATMOSPHERIC EFFECTS ON THE FELT BODY AND ON EMBODIED DISPOSITION

As emphasized in the previous chapter, atmospheres become tangible by the felt body, especially through some of its islands such as a turning stomach, a headache, tickling feet, or butterflies in the stomach. Students receive a feedback from their felt body about the situation in the classroom. But it is also possible that an atmosphere engulfs someone completely, just like being girdled by a fog at a cold November morning (Schmitz 2014, 52). At school, this could be a certain atmosphere such as an atmosphere of impatience that is accelerated by frequently looking at the watch, urging for results, or collecting worksheets very early. It could also be a sphere of acceptance, transmitted by a friendly nod, a tap on one's shoulder, or a favourable encouragement.

Atmospheres can be noticed by a single person and cause an affective involvement. But in the common situations in a classroom, there also occur *collective atmospheres* that may be experienced by all persons concerned. This happens either through solidary incorporation or through mutual antagonistic incorporation (Schmitz 2014, 56). When a teacher enters a classroom full of tidy pupils and is able to draw their interest on a specific topic, we can speak of a *collective atmosphere* of contagious enthusiasm. Feelings like joy, curiosity, sorrow, or boredom also spread quickly in the room and have a contagious effect.

But atmospheres do not only have a spontaneous and momentary impact on subjects or groups. Rather, particular atmospheres of an institution take influence on the *embodied disposition* of all persons concerned (Wolf 2015, 21; Julmi 2015, 189). An example would be someone who has been socialized by the army for a long time and even after his service remains in his military habitus of upright posture and discipline. The *embodied disposition* is the embodied affective constitution of a subject that could be characterized as a basic mood that is partly innate and partly

acquired (Gugutzer 2002, 96). Schmitz speaks of an individual style of embodied resonance on external causes, impressions, and experiences (Schmitz 1980, 296). In this sense, a student develops an individual way to cope with the different kinds of stimulation of the environment and with their respective demands.

The *embodied disposition* consists of three components: the vital drive, the receptivity to external stimuli, and the ability to pay attention (Schmitz 1990, 315). The vital drive can be described as an expansive as well as contractive vitality of the embodied energy (Schmitz 1990, 128), which includes the degree of agility and elasticity to switch between the states of contraction and expansion and the flexibility to balance the subjective condition between these poles. If a student tends towards depression, he gets stuck in contraction and is no longer able to oscillate between personal regression and personal emancipation.

The ability to pay attention may be explained as the capacity of opening oneself to others, towards things, and to the requirements of life (Wolf 2017, 544). Furthermore, it includes the ability to perceive them, to engage with them, and to adapt to their needs. This kind of receptivity constitutes an essential basis for every learning process. A pupil who is in a permanent state of contraction is not able to open up for conversation, discussion, and new impulses, whereas a balanced child exhibits an urge to explore.

The receptivity to external stimuli shall also be referred to as a sensitivity that enables its bearer either to recognize environmental stimuli very differentiated or trying hard to ignore them (Schmitz 1990, 128). It is important for a learner to receive the basic information, but he also has to select and forget irrelevant details. Children may suffer from a permanent sensory overload and may not be able to distinguish between what is important and what is not. But they can also experience a lack of stimuli and feel unchallenged. For the learning process, it is important to reach a balanced perception of stimuli.

Atmospheres can influence the *embodied disposition* as well as its components and effect on the felt body as a whole as well as regarding only its corporeal islands. Constricting atmospheres may reduce the vital drive and the ability to pay attention. The receptivity to external stimuli could increase to an overwhelming sensory overload, but it is also possible that the body repels stimuli and does not allow them to reach it. Since atmospheres have an important influence not only on a single situation in the classroom but also on an attitude towards life (Scheler 1954, 350), we now examine what degree of predictability can be reached.

6 PREDICTABILITY OF ATMOSPHERES IN A PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT

Whereas Schmitz usually talks of the pathic quality of atmospheres (2014, 19), Böhme emphasizes the designable side of them (2013, 38). While it is possible to take influence on some components of an atmosphere, such as a warm, inviting light, or a friendly welcome, no one can produce an atmosphere as a whole because it is a sum of different, interdependent influence factors (Wolf 2015, 24). An atmospheric effect in the end remains inaccessible, and a specific recipe to intentionally create it does not exist (Griffero 2014a, 35).

In an educational context, a teacher is able to come closer to the *collective atmosphere* in the classroom by an ability called “pedagogical tact”, focusing on the unpredictable aspects of teaching (Muth 1967, 11). It is a personal style of dealing with students (Luhmann 2002, 122) and the ability to empathize with persons, room, and the situation (Buno 1650, 27). In this sense, Friedrich Herbart explains that teaching does not only consist of cognitive thinking and science but also of opening one’s mind to the disposition of the pupils and evaluating the situation intuitively (Benner 1993, 45). Pedagogical tact comprises of two parts: sensitivity (*Feingefühl*) and restraint (*Zurückhaltung*). Muth illustrates sensitivity as a distinct sense for the counterpart, his unique character, his intrinsic right, and deep respect to his inaccessibility (1967, 20). Sensitivity unfolds in a concrete situation and cannot be learnt theoretically but only through experience. Restraint refers to inaction rather than to an action; nevertheless, it is directed towards the other. One does not cross boundaries but is engaged for the pupil. Tactfulness enables a teacher to intuitively make the right decisions by relying on his feelings. He develops a sense for the common situation that enables him to perceive emotions, moods, and atmospheres (Herbart 1964, 126). This “atmospheric competence” enables the pedagogue to react to the mood in the class and to develop activities that balance the climate out. But tact is not only a naturalistic feeling or a mere instinct; it is based on educational knowledge as well as on practical experience. The interaction between teacher and student is characterized by the embodied exchange process of mutual antagonistic incorporation that is not only taking place from person to person but also between man and things (Griffero 2014b, 24). In addition, atmospheres come and go, the teacher behaves towards the different demands of the situation by

means of tact. To an extent, atmospheres and tact remain inaccessible because it is not possible to plan them precisely. Nevertheless, we are able to influence them, for example, by preparing the room, through our presence, or through act or omission.

7 CONCLUSION

Since atmospheres play a significant role in pedagogic contexts, teachers should place greater emphasis on that phenomenon. They are able to simulate the future affective involvement or physical feeling of the students by putting themselves in their frame of mind and thoughtfully preparing the learning environment. This simulation is based on a tacit bodily knowledge of the pupils (Griffero 2014b, 35). The educator anticipates the future atmosphere and tries to adjust himself to the needs of a positive setting. Because spatial structures submit suggestions of motion that are received and embodied by the learners, it is important to provide a room that makes children attentive, curious, and motivated. This requires an ordered structure of the room, adjusted to the needs of children and especially the opportunity to co-design the room and to open up space for movement (Wolf 2018, 190). The second central factor of taking influence on atmospheres at school is the self-presentation of the teacher (Wolf 2016, 204). A pedagogue should employ patience, confidence, and serenity to encourage children in their learning efforts (Bollnow 1964, 11). A child should experience that it may learn at its own pace, that the teacher is looking forward to its success of learning and that a learning process is something light and elated, not to be taken too seriously (Wolf 2016, 205). An atmosphere of competition, struggle for power, and pressure to perform may lead to feelings of shortcoming, weakness, and failure, especially in cases where children cannot meet the high expectations of teachers or parents. Such students experience an affective involvement of contraction. Especially disadvantaged children need a lot of encouragement and mutual incorporation in resonant relationships (Wolf 2018, 190). Embodied resonance seems to be an irreplaceable quality in learning relationships (Rosa 2016, 246). This is the reason why pedagogues should develop an *atmospheric competence* that enables them to sense the single mood of individual pupils as well as the *collective atmosphere* in the classroom. The sensitivity to receive subtle embodied signals in mutual antagonistic incorporation seems to be the key to future educational action.

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Psychopathology, Atmospheres, and Clinical Transformations: Towards a Field-Based Clinical Practice

Gianni Francesetti

1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of atmosphere in psychopathology has been used sporadically and by only a few, albeit authoritative, authors, from Karl Jaspers (1963) through to Hubertus Tellenbach, in particular (1968; see also Costa et al. 2014), although such contributions, largely neglected by debate in psychiatry and psychotherapy, today are particularly interesting because they point to and support a conception of psychopathology that goes beyond a symptomatic and individualistic understanding of human suffering. The dominant paradigm in clinical psychotherapy and psychiatry, today, makes use of third-person descriptive diagnosis, and clinical work aims at changing the way the patient (dys)functions. Such an approach is far from satisfactory. To begin with, a diagnosis that is limited to comparing observable traits to a set list of symptoms is highly problematic (Migone 2013; Barron 1998; Borgna

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1988; Francesetti and Gecele 2009) and inevitably tends to neglect the specificity and richness of the patient's experience. That constitutes a major loss for therapy, but also for the potential clinical practitioners who have to learn from the singularity of each of their patients and open up their conception of psychopathology towards new horizons. Moreover, by limiting the scope of action to modifying dysfunctions in the patient, the risk is that the functional purpose of the symptoms fails to be grasped and the transformative meaning of suffering overlooked, while suffering itself is attributed entirely to the patient, without taking into account co-creation phenomena in psychotherapy in the therapy setting. Such an approach has not proven to be successful in addressing the problems it promised to resolve (Bracken et al. 2012).

In this chapter, I attempt to describe how the concept of "atmosphere" can help open up a different understanding of psychopathology, diagnosis, and clinical practice. I also attempt to show how the concept can help steer us towards an *aesthetic diagnosis* that goes beyond the diagnosis of symptoms and towards a *field-based clinical practice*, which goes beyond the individual or bi-personal. It is a paradigm shift that will lead us onto new epistemological ground, one that is different from the individualistic perspective, where clinical work focuses on the suffering individual to effect change, but also from the bi-personal paradigm, which sees the relationship co-created by two individuals who come together and jointly produce change. This new horizon *posits the relationship before the related*, where subjects and the world emerge incessantly from an undifferentiated ground in which they are not yet defined. As such, even suffering and therapy come from something much vaster than the people involved—the patient and the therapist—who therefore find themselves in a landscape that imposes limits, but also offers possibilities.

2 THE PATHIC DIMENSION: WHERE THE SUBJECT AND THE WORLD CO-EMERGE

In ordinary, everyday life, we live in a world in which subject and object are givens, separate figures that are not problematic. Husserl calls this mode of experience the *natural attitude* (Husserl 1913). It is a perspective that underpins the conception of the mono-personal mind, giving rise to a psychopathology that treats suffering as a dysfunction in the patient and therapy as a means of correcting that malfunction. One way of overcoming that approach is to observe how subjects interact with each other

and with the environment, and how artificial it is to abstract them from each other and the world they live in: the isolated individual does not exist. Such a position has radically characterized Gestalt Therapy ever since its beginnings (Perls et al. 1951), alongside the systemic perspective (Bateson 1979) and, more recently, psychoanalysis (albeit not in all its currents), through Sullivan's interpersonal psychoanalysis and, later, the so-called relational turn (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983; The Boston Change Process Study Group 2010; Lingardi et al. 2011). In this way, we have moved towards a paradigm—what we might call the paradigm of the bi-personal mind—where subjects co-create their experience and together affect change. There exists a more radical paradigm, however, where subjects are not given, but emerge themselves from something that comes before them: a field perspective. We see the vestiges of this process in the words *subject* and *object*: *sub-jectum*, in the Latin, means cast down below, *ob-jectum* means cast out there, thus bearing evidence of their not being original essences but the product of the act of being cast into two different regions of the experience. German Berrios (Marková and Berrios 2012) notes how the current meaning of “object”, as something independent, and subjective, as something mental and relative to the individual, only developed during the seventeenth century with the establishment of the scientific method. Before then, the terms were used to mean the outcomes of a process. Hence, if the world as we conceive it—a world inhabited by subjects separated from stable objects—is the outcome of a process, what can we say about the process itself?

Metzger (1941) provided empirical evidence showing that perception is a process which, in just fractions of a second, leads to a perceptive experience in which the subject perceives himself as separate from the object, where the subject is detached both spatially and emotionally, and the object possesses a clear, definite outline. This outcome of perception, which Metzger called *Endgestalt* (final Gestalt) is the result of a process that arises from a very different, original perceptive moment. The perceptive forms of that initial moment are called *Vorgestalten* (pre-Gestalten). With *Vorgestalten* the perceptive experience is diffuse, undifferentiated, and global. The figure has yet to stand out separately from the background; something is there, but it is an unstable, confused, and indefinite presence. It is an experience of non-rest, and hence of restlessness, before a subject is distinguished clearly from an object. With *Vorgestalten* at the origin of all perception, the experience is atmospheric and pre-dualistic, lying at the basis of our pathic life (Tellenbach 1968; Böhme 2001, 2017; Griffero 2010; Schmitz 2009; Francesetti 2015a). “Pathic” (or *pathos*—πάθος)

refers to what we feel immediately and passively. We are seized by the pathic; we do not choose it, we are moved by it; pathic has the same root as passion and pathology, both happen to us and take us without choice: it is something *to which* we are subject (rather than *of which* we are subject). The construct of *being moved*, and its implications for psychopathology, is not very well developed in psychology yet, but a growing interest can be found in the recent literature (Menninghaus et al. 2015). Pathos eludes causal logic since that “by which” we are moved cannot be grounded in something earlier than us, in the sense that what comes before the emergence of “me” is not something that is already defined. Pathos emerges by its nature from mystery, from the mysterious and impenetrable dimension from which experience originates: “we start elsewhere, in a place where we have never been and will never be” (Waldenfels 2011, 84). The pathic dimension is by definition alien to the subject, as it is situated at the root of the emerging of the subject, when the subject has yet to be formed, moving it by calling it to respond, incessantly. This paradigm in which subjects emerge from the undifferentiated ground of the situation can be found in the conception of the self, developed by Perls et al. (1951) at the very origins of Gestalt Therapy, where the self is not an individual attribute, but emerges as an expression of the situation itself, and the possibility of exercising choice is itself a product of the making of the self in each and every situation (Robine 1997; Philippson 2009; Vázquez Bandín 2014; for more on this, see Robine 2016).

3 THE *ATMOS* AND ITS TRACES

In the sensorial dimension of the pathic, in the moment of the *Vorgestalten*, perception is atmospheric; it is what Minkowski (1927) calls the “vague and confused”. It is something I perceive somewhere in the air, without being able to attribute it to myself or to the other—or rather, calling it “something” is too defined, but it certainly is not nothing. In that hiatus without language, the word *almost-entity* or *quasi-thing* comes to the rescue, indicating an atmospheric that has yet to precipitate into a subject or into an object (Schmitz 2009). As Schmitz conceives them, atmospheres exist in the environment independently of the subject, seizing it from the outside. That is not the case, however, in the perspective I am presenting here. Rather, the atmospheric is the way we originally, vaguely, and globally perceive the situation, before subject and object stabilize into stable poles, and hence without being able to

situate what we feel completely inside or outside of us. In the atmospheric, figure and background are not yet defined, but form an affectively charged tone that is diffuse in space, immediate and without clear boundaries, from which subject and object will emerge, impregnating and colouring the nascent experience, which encompasses subjects and objects in a reciprocal, circular making. We could say that it is here that the experience consists of observing objects which in turn observe us, in that they have yet to be constituted stably as objects and imbued with subjectivity. Space itself and time are far from the objective characteristics we attribute to clock time and metric Euclidean space. This is the dimension of *Das Unheimliche*, “the uncanny” described by Freud (1919),¹ which we encounter when something is perceived as both familiar and strange at the same time, hovering between the animate and the inanimate, the living and the dead, the new and the well known, revelation and homeliness. In that initial moment, there is no clear distinction between different senses, and the perception tends to be synaesthetic (Merleau-Ponty 1945; Masciandaro 2018; Griffero 2010, 2016). The pathic is felt as something that just *happens*, well before it *happens to me*, as it is from that happening, which needs to be attributed, that a “me” is constituted. Thus, there is a constituent incommensurability between that moment of experience and language, and the word can only approximate the welling moment of experience, which remains ineffable. But that approximation, that circling around lived experience without ever managing to capture it—a phenomenon that I call aesthetic excess (Francesetti 2017)—is the fount of the constant search, birth and rebirth of the word, just as is the case for incommensurable numbers, such as *pi*, which can only be approximated because they are never ending and the closer one comes to pinning them down, the more decimal points emerge, forever to infinity (Mazzeo 2013). The atmospheric is, therefore, and first of all, vaguely corporeal and only later verbalizable. But since it is pathic, its corporeality is not something that is given as “mine”. Rather, it is the alien that emerges and defines a “me” by its difference—it is the out of place, the uncanny, the *atopon*, from which the novelty of the world emerges (Francesetti 2019). *Atopon*, from the Ancient Greek, means “out of place”: “Gadamer reminds us that the Greeks had a word for that which brings understanding to a standstill. That word was *atopon*, which in reality means ‘that which cannot be fit-

¹ I thank Carla Martinetto for her contribution to this passage.

ted into the categories of expectation in our understanding and which therefore causes us to be suspicious of it” (Costa et al. 2014, 356).

In psychopathology, psychotic experience itself can be viewed as a disruption in the coming into being of subjectivity, in the emergence of subject and world as distinct, but at the same time appurtenant to each other. People who have psychotic experiences live in the atmospheric, in the glowing hot crucible from which subject and world struggle to emerge without managing to. The drama here lies not only in the anguish for a separate world which fails to be constituted, but also in the lack of a language to convey the experience in communicable terms. The artistic and poetic capacity of those who have psychotic experiences also lies in the extreme struggle between the unspeakable and the urge to speak: madness is thus seen clearly here as the unfortunate companion of poetry (Brentano, in Béguin 1939). Even delusion is a creative attempt to give narrative form to unspeakable anguish, and hallucination an extreme attempt to constitute an object out in the world, distinct from oneself.

4 PSYCHOPATHOLOGY IN A FIELD PERSPECTIVE: SUFFERING THAT IS REVIVED IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE ENCOUNTER

Identifying and valuing the atmospheric pathic dimension, as we have sought to do, enables us to focus on the fact that in the therapy session, the patient and therapist emerge from a pre-dualistic and undifferentiated dimension. The experiential phenomena of their coming together emerge within a horizon of possible forms that I call the “phenomenal field” (Francesetti 2019). They are perceptible as an atmosphere, an affectively charged space-time made up of horizons of restraints and potentialities. In the phenomenal field of the specific session, certain phenomena can emerge while others cannot, well before any choice can be exercised. As it is a therapeutic encounter, the forms that emerge follow the intentionalities of caring and seeking care, for which suffering and transformation acquire particular importance. To suffer, from the Latin *sufferre* (from *sub*, “from below”, and *ferre*, “to bear”) means to bear upon oneself. The patient is therefore he who bears something and brings it to the therapist. What does he bring? What the intentionality of the therapeutic situation entails is that the patient brings to the therapist the pain of his personal story, which he has not been able to face, which is revived here so as to be faced. If that pain has not been faced, it is because the conditions did not exist for that to

happen, first and foremost the presence of the other. The assumption here is that the pain needs the flesh of the other to be faced. To give an example, a child who is the victim of neglect, mistreatment, or abuse is a child that has experienced the absence of the other and bears within her an embodied memory. Absence is not just when the other was away (as may be the case with neglect). Rather, and above all, it is when a person was physically present but absent in the relationship, showing no respect for dignity, uniqueness, otherness, needs, and the call for love. That child will be unable to bear her pain upon herself because that would be the outcome of a “fair formulation” of what happened. Instead she will give that memory the least intrusive form possible, through dissociation, for instance, which will enable the emotional pressure of the experience to be reduced—in part, at least. Thus, suffering will be borne as absence, as an impossibility of being fully present in the relationships of her life, where the dissociated affects are relevant. What is brought to the therapy session, therefore, is not the form of her pain but the way the memory has been borne up until the here and now. What arrives is an absence. An absence in flesh and blood, as Sartre would have put it (1964), a retreat from the encounter, from existing fully—from the Latin, *absens*, present participle of *ab-sum*, “to move away from the other”, from fully being-with. Absence leads us to presence, from the Latin, *praesens*, present participle of *prae-sum*, “to be with the other”—thus presence is radically relational, tending towards the other, towards being together (Francesetti and Zarini forthcoming). We could say that what the patient bears is what he does not have (a pain seeking the light with the other, but which is manifested as the absence of pain), which the therapist makes present by lending it his flesh. In clinical experience, “lending one’s flesh” is not a metaphor, but a concrete and simple experience, which lies in feeling something that does not already belong to me, but which comes from the field from which I emerge.

It is important to note how the pain is not something predefined and formulated, simply waiting to be revealed—as orthodox psychoanalysis would see it, with its theory of repression, where remedy lies in its revelation through interpretation. Here, instead, it is an urge that needs to find a form in the possibilities of the therapeutic encounter, an experience that is not yet formulated, which lies in the plane of the atmospheric and ineffable as it is pathic in nature. This is close to the conception of unformulated experience proposed by Stern (1997), which also nods to the atmospheric dimension through which what is not yet formulated emerges.

The therapeutic situation is therefore a crucible for the emergence of the phenomenal field, which is the ecstasy (*ec-stasy*, or *coming up*) of the situation, where the therapeutic intentionalities that the patient and the therapist experience through their being absorbed by the pathic of the moment are put into motion. It is not simply the repetition of something past, but the use of present possibilities to bring to light an unformulated—and hence unassimilated—experience that has never seen the light in any relationship and has remained unformulated as an absence in the flesh of the patient, persisting in space and time to the here and now. From the point of view of chronological time, the urge comes from past experience, but from the point of view of lived time, it comes from the here and now, emerging as a new potentiality that runs the risk of repeating—in a new way—what has already occurred. Bearing—suffering—seeks a clearing to exist (*ex-sist*, to *come out*), where it is taken in and taken up.²

5 DIAGNOSIS IN THE FIELD PERSPECTIVE: FEELING THE ABSENCE THAT IS CALLING OUT TO BE PRESENT?

Referring readers to the previous literature for a discussion and insight into diagnosis in Gestalt Therapy (Francesetti and Gecele 2009; Francesetti 2012; Francesetti et al. 2013; Roubal et al. 2013, 2017), here I focus solely on a fundamental point, which is that if suffering emerges in the therapeutic situation in forms of absence in the encounter, then diagnosis is the process of evaluating those absences and their calling for presence. The diagnosis we are speaking about here is not the extrinsic diagnosis of measuring what the patient relates, does, and is against an external grid of reference. Such diagnosis (for instance, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—DSM or the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems—ICD)³ is often necessary to support the therapeutic process, and the clinical practitioner needs to know its procedures, as well as its limits. Instead, what we are speaking of here is intrinsic, or aesthetic, diagnosis, involving an evaluation of the quality of

²We are describing here—with a different epistemology and so with different language, openings, and risks—the phenomena that Psychoanalysis calls *enactements*, that is transference and counter-transference (Jacobs 1986).

³We refer to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), published by the American Psychiatric Association, and to the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems* (ICD), produced by the World Health Organization, the two main manuals which provide criteria for defining mental disorders.

the flow of experience in the here and now of the session. Aesthetic diagnosis is, first of all, an evaluation of the emergent phenomenal field and hence of the pathic and atmospheric that appears in the therapeutic situation. Taking in the movement of the flow of experience is already a contribution to its taking on form.

The attitude that makes this type of diagnosis possible⁴ requires the therapist, to begin with, to be attuned to his bodily experience, as though the body were a sort of seismograph able to intercept even the slightest movement in the field, and to carefully listen for the resonances in him (Francesetti 2019), the fount of aesthetic relational knowledge (Spagnuolo Lobb 2018). He prepares himself for not knowing what will happen, what alien will emerge, and so he waits, tolerating a profound uncertainty (Staemmler 1997, 2006). To do this, he leans on his own corporeality and his breathing, in a form of *epoché* (Bloom 2009). He is open and attentive to anything that could emerge in his own lived experience, curious about any sensation or image that might appear. He is willing to be moved, even by something he least expects, to find himself in a landscape in which he is thrown by no choice of his own. He is aware that any sort of definition he might give to what emerges will only be provisional, imprecise, and by its nature incomplete. He will not even know whether what is perceived belongs to the therapist or the patient, and the greatest risk here is that of attributing it to either one or the other, when very often attributing it is of little importance.

What is drawn out by the therapy situation and by transformation processes are those parts of the patient's experience that have yet to find form and place in a relationship. As such, what is relevant often emerges as out of place, as disturbing, uncanny, as *atopon*, as what was excluded from the relationship cannot but be branded as unexpected, as a disquieting guest, the alien *par excellence*. But an alien that has always lived with us. The therapist will feel it as something he would rather not feel, something out of place, as we said. For instance, it may be a feeling of boredom or anger, of annoyance or attraction, or sleepiness or inadequacy, of a solitude he wished he did not have, which he tries to dismiss, or of disturbance or interference. It is a quality that often comes with the emergence of something that has long remained in the shadows, ineffable and formless, which presses to come to light. These are the pointers of greatest interest and potential for transformation in the therapeutic situation.

⁴For a description of the skills implied in this process, see Francesetti (2019); Francesetti and Roubal ([forthcoming](#)).

Thus, usually, there is no truth to be revealed; rather, it is about taking in and giving form to the drives that follow the intentionalities for contact at play. Taking in that flow and, inevitably, at the same time, supporting the process that gives it form is diagnosis and therapy in one and the same act. As such, it is not the patient that is evaluated and treated, because what is evaluated is the process of figure formation, the *Gestaltung*. That is from where the term “Gestalt Therapy” comes because what is supported is the formation of the *Gestalt* (Francesetti 2012, 2015a).

Extrinsic diagnosis and intrinsic or aesthetic diagnosis are not mutually exclusive alternatives. Typically, the therapist will move, more or less intentionally, between the one and the other (Roubal et al. 2013).

6 THERAPY IN A FIELD PERSPECTIVE: MODULATING THE PRESENCE OF THE THERAPIST

We have seen how taking-in is itself an act that gives form and hence how it is therapeutic for the unformulated experience that urges to see the light. But it is not enough. Here we are still hanging in the balance, on the fine line between retraumatization and cure. The crucial step is made here. When a resonance emerges, the therapist inevitably risks putting it into circulation by bringing it into play in a retraumatizing way (Francesetti 2019; Jacobs 2017). It is a risk that is inevitable, as avoiding it would mean abstracting oneself from the relationship, which carries no lesser risk. What step will put the therapist on a different road to repeating, albeit in a new way, the trauma or the same old game? The question is a central one because while it is true that as long as we are absorbed by the phenomenal field, by the pathic that moves us, we are open to the possibility of therapy, it is not itself the “cure”, but only the start of the journey. For now, we are simply in the landscape where suffering becomes present, which is no small thing, but we risk simply reviving it and etching it even more deeply in memory. To describe the move to be taken, we can say that the therapist takes in the resonance, the way in which he is moved, but does not identify with it. Instead he opens up a breach by being curious, by recognizing that something alien is knocking at the door, emerging and coming in, in a shadowy, twilight world where something is happening. The therapist is awakened by that knocking but does not prematurely attribute a meaning to it, or take it as a defined and definitive truth about

the patient, himself, or the situation. He waits and hesitates,⁵ from the Latin, *haesitare*, to hold fast. He stops, uncertain and perplexed. And in that non-doing, that holding fast in suspension, letting what happens happen and happen to him, the therapist does something important: he intentionally lends himself to the situation, letting the situation “use” him for the transformation processes at play to unfold (Yontef 2005). His awareness is an element that makes the difference. It means he is aware of what he feels, of what is happening to him, and turns to it with curiosity, taking in what will be the first impulse towards doing or saying something, without acting on it or dismissing it. Even if what comes is out of place, an annoying *atopon* he would rather discard, he holds onto it—the stone the builders reject will become a cornerstone. There are two risks here at this moment: that the therapist acts out the resonances he feels without being aware of it, or that he discards them as disturbances. In the first case, he will put the theme of suffering back into circulation; in the second he will inhibit an unformulated part of the field from emerging through him.

Resonance is a vibration corresponding to “something” that is *present* and at the same time *neglected* in the phenomenal field, which seeks flesh to come to light. Borrowing the words of Jean-Luc Marion (2003), the therapist lends his flesh to the other so that what is borne—the suffering—can emerge. The patient has deserted his painful flesh, leaving behind an absence that only the other—in this case the therapist—can dwell in by lending his own flesh. But he does not lend *all* of his flesh. If he did, he would only be acted upon and would lose sight of the game that is being played out and the margin of freedom there is to choose whether and how to play it.

The therapist’s realization of what is happening to him and his incomplete identification with it marks the shift from the phenomenal field absorbing the therapist to the “phenomenological field” (Francesetti 2019). That shift is marked by the introduction of a greater degree of freedom in the situation, for which the therapist is able to realize and verbalize—within the limits inherent to language, as we discussed earlier—what is happening. Now the therapist is not just absorbed by the field, but he becomes aware of how he is absorbed, of what happens, and of the game that he is called upon, and that he himself calls, to play. Here he can make choices, as there is sufficient freedom to do so. Therapy work in this

⁵On the relationship between hesitation, experience, and aesthetics, see Tagliapietra (2017).

perspective is the modulation of the therapist's presence and not the changing of the patient (Beisser 1970). Following Sartre's lead (1946), something can always be done with what is done with us. For a description of the therapeutic steps involved in this perspective (which I call HARP) and the skills necessary, see Francesetti (2019).

It should be clear by now that the paradigm I am describing involves a major shift from the model in which the therapist is an expert who acts on how the patient functions to modify him and make him better (the medical or mono-personal paradigm). But neither is it equivalent to a co-creation paradigm in which the therapist and the patient interact and together effect change (the co-creation or bi-personal paradigm). What we are proposing is a different scenario, which I call a "field paradigm", underpinning a *Field-based Clinical Practice* where the therapist is at the disposal of the transformative forces in the field, which transcend both him and the patient.

Absence is the way in which pain that cannot be formulated is borne, hence it is suffering. The moment in which the therapist becomes present to the absence, the pain is no longer absent and can unfold, taking on new life in the flesh of both, and both become more alive. Mortified flesh is revived. Silenced flesh can sing once more. We see an enhancement of being, as Simone Weil would have put it (1952). Bearing witness to this process is the ephemeral yet eternal beauty that emerges in the encounter.

The field paradigm enables us to include, study, and understand among the factors of therapy not just the direct action of the therapist and interaction between the patient and therapist, but also environmental and contextual factors and the effect of different settings (for instance, how therapy can differ if conducted in one's own private practice or in a public service where one works in a team, or the difference between a group session and an individual setting), and even the use of altered states of consciousness and the use of psychoactive substances that amplify pathos, driving the unformulated to emerge with greater force and find space in the therapeutic situation (Carhart-Harris et al. 2014).

7 WILL BEAUTY SAVE THE WORLD?

If suffering therefore manifests itself in the clinical encounter as pathos and atmosphere, colouring and permeating the space and time of the encounter, then do different atmospheres exist for different types of suffering? In

other words, is it possible to outline a typology of psychopathological atmospheres? It would appear the answer is yes, and such a typology would become a description of the perceptive qualities of the different types of absences that can emerge in therapy sessions. It is certainly not hard to distinguish the atmospheric qualities of a depressive field from an anxious field. In a depressive field, for instance, the air is gloomy and grave, space dilates, and something pushes or pulls bodies down (Francesetti 2015b); whereas in an anxious field, time typically speeds up, space contracts, and something draws us upwards. If the anxiety is the kind associated with panic, bodily organs are pushed to fore in their dysfunction, and a mortal danger winds through the air, paralysing us (Francesetti 2017), whereas with anxiety of the obsessive kind, space-time rolls into siege time, where things close in, pressing against us, time becomes linear, uniform motion and wait becomes alarm and the control of boundaries (Francesetti 2017). In a paranoid type of psychotic field, the air can become suspended in anguishing expectancy, something is about to happen or arrive, but we do not know when or from where, and the sense of alarm is an incessant hissing from which it is essential not to be distracted (Francesetti and Spagnuolo Lobb 2013). We could go on for every single type of suffering and expand the descriptions to make them increasingly more detailed and evocative. Every clinical atmosphere is the epiphany of a way of bearing pain on oneself, of suffering, of sketching out landscapes that convey an unspeakable experience that seeks to exist through the encounter and the opening of the flesh. Every atmosphere is singular—both unique and typical at the same time—just as human beings are. Such an exploration could perhaps support both the extrinsic and intrinsic diagnostic process, potentially constituting a point of intersection between the two methods by focusing on an evaluation of what emerges in the encounter. And it could also perhaps steer the clinical practitioner towards the call that the specific actualized field bears with it, thus pointing the way for therapy to follow.

There is one atmosphere, however, that deserves a privileged position in our discussion, as it is an atmosphere that emerges as a sign that a clinically significant transformation is underway (Francesetti 2012). Whatever the psychopathological field we start from, when unformulated pain is taken-in in the flesh of the therapist, a shift can be felt in the situation towards an opening that is touching and moving and felt to be good and beautiful. It is a particular quality of beauty that is neither objective nor subjective, but rather emerges precisely as an atmosphere that is clearly perceptible to all

present when doing group work, when something beautiful appears and floats in the air. When it emerges, our attention becomes more acute, fatigue vanishes, time slows down, space lightens up, and, in varying degrees of intensity, surprise, expectation, and wonder appear, just like when watching a new baby being born. It is not a beauty one wants to possess, however; rather, it is “a fruit we look at without trying to seize it” (Weil 1952, 150). A beauty that stirs us and *moves us together*. Yet, it is not just pleasure, but rather a pleasure that at the same time strikes the chords of pain. Or, to put it in other words, the pleasure we feel when pain, after infinite and inenarrable voyages, finally finds its landfall in the encounter. In this sense, the emergent beauty of the encounter is the epiphany of the therapeutic transformation, and although it is ephemeral as an atmosphere, it leaves a lasting trace on the embodied. The relationship between pain and beauty is a theme that permeates the works of Dostoevsky:

Madame Yepanchina studied Nastasya Filippovna's portrait for some time in silence [...]

‘Does that kind of beauty appeal to you?’ she suddenly addressed the Prince.

‘Yes ... that kind...’ the Prince replied, with a certain effort.

‘You mean just that kind?’

‘Just that kind.’

‘Why?’ In that face ... there's a great deal of suffering. (1869, 85)

In another passage, Ippolit asks the Prince tauntingly and ironically what kind of beauty will save the world:

Is it right, Prince, that you once said the world would be saved by “beauty”? Gentlemen,’ he suddenly shouted loudly to all and sundry, ‘the Prince says the world will be saved by beauty! And I say he has playful notions like that because he's in love. Gentlemen, the Prince is in love [...] What beauty is going to save the world?’ (Dostoevsky 1869, 85)

I will leave that question open here. We all know we do not know the answer, but I would at least like to change its tone to be neither a joke nor a provocation, but a serious question.

And I would go so far as to say that in clinical work, when such atmospheric beauty appears, coming to light and illuminating us in turn, a small piece of the world is, perhaps, saved.

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The Lightness of Atmospheric Communities

Mikkel Bille

1 INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the British media picked up the colloquial Danish term *hygge* as a characteristic atmosphere ingrained in everyday life. It is an atmosphere, it was argued, that may help explain why Danes are among the happiest people on earth. The media interest in *hygge* was so widespread that it came in third place as *Collins' Word of the Year*, just after *Brexit* and *Trumpism*,¹ and in second place as *Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year*, after *post-truth*.² The hype also spurred a long range of books with titles such as *The Little Book of Hygge – The Danish Way to Live Well*, *Hygge – The Art of Happiness*, *How to Hygge – Secrets of Nordic Living*, or even the self-help book *Hygge Habits – 42 Habits for a Happy Life Through Danish Hygge that Takes Five Minutes or Less*. It came to around 25 books in 2016 and 2017 alone, about an atmosphere that not only is experienced, but also characterizes the Danish way of living.

¹<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/03/brexit-named-word-of-the-year-ahead-of-trumpism-and-hygge> (accessed May 2019).

²<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/shortlist-2016> (accessed May 2019).

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Hygge is often translated into ‘cosiness’. Many Danes would, however, argue that it is an untranslatable and exclusively Danish atmosphere characterized by an informal and relaxed way of being together shaped through the affective quality of particular material surroundings. Countering this national contention, scholars often argue that the national exclusiveness of *hygge* is incorrect, since most notably the Norwegian *koselig*, but also the German *Gemütlichkeit*, the Dutch *gezelligheid* and the Russian *ujut* are closely related (Borish 1991, 276; Gullestad 1992, 79–81; Levisen 2012, 110; Linnet 2011, 35). But the priority given to this cosy atmosphere in everyday life and language is, nonetheless, particularly pronounced in Denmark. The high regard and importance of *hygge* is perhaps best illustrated by Minister of Culture Bertel Haarder, who, in 2016, announced a public vote on the ten values in Denmark that were most important for future Danish society materialized in a Canon of Denmark. Along with ‘trust’, ‘welfare society’ and ‘gender equality’, *hygge* became one of these key Danish values, which immigrants and Danes in general should recognize as a value that ties Danes together. As the Canon of Denmark remarks: “*Hygge* is a social activity that can take part in creating communities in everyday life”.³ In spring 2018, it was even planned by the tourist organization VisitDenmark to create an application to put *hygge* on the UNESCO representative list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. It is a rare occasion that an atmosphere—otherwise understood as felt, temporal and ephemeral—is recognized as a characteristic (if not a defining trait) of a community, even a nation, and one that may even be emulated elsewhere to live a ‘happy life’.

The many books seemed intent on objectifying *hygge* as an atmosphere and presenting it as something that happens when someone lights a candle and pulls on woollen socks or a blanket. However, it is not solely up to material objects and light to make an atmosphere emerge—human subjects are needed. As anthropologist Judith Friedman Hansen notes:

In its aspects of cosiness, of relaxed enjoyment in the warm aura of friendship or in the familiar security of kinship, the value placed on *hygge* reflects this desire for closeness, physical and emotional. The chandelier which lights the area in which the clustered group sits is commonly the sole or the strongest light in the room, visually circumscribing the cluster and defining it as a unit. (1976, 59)

³ <https://www.danmarkskanon.dk/vaerdi/hygge/> (accessed May 2019).

From this relationship between objects creating a unity between a space and the desires of people, *hygge* emerges as a culturally specific atmospheric concept through which socio-material life is organized (Levisen 2012, chap. 3; Linnet 2011). In the academic research on *hygge*, it appears as a motivating factor for doing things, where the process of creating and experiencing *hygge* in a sense *is* the goal, based on a premise of equality and avoiding conflict (Levisen 2012, 104). This means that while the cosy atmosphere may be what is experienced, it is also what *should* be experienced, and thus part of everyday practices of attuning atmospheres. The case of an atmosphere characterized as *hygge* thus emphasizes normativity and everyday practices and shows that atmospheres are not solely about individual or collective experience *in* and *of* space, but also about collective identities and a sense of community.

The purpose in this chapter is neither to provide an ethnographic exploration of *hygge* as a cultural term and practice (Bille 2015, 2019; Hansen 1976; Howel and Sundberg 2015; Levisen 2012; Linnet 2011) nor to scrutinize the much-debated notion of community. Rather, it is to offer an alternative to think through what atmospheres are and do, by combining the two. It is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Copenhagen among circa 60 households. The chapter began with the media coverage and will continue by focusing on how and why people orchestrate atmospheres and how *hygge* partakes in shaping a sense of belonging and community. First, I will address the role of cultural norms in sensing atmospheres. Then I turn to a discussion of how the everyday practice of illumination attunes domestic atmospheres through what Gernot Böhme terms “lightness” (2017, chap. 20), making the world not only visible but also appear in a particular way. This exemplifies a productive shift in focus from atmospheres as staged for a passive perceiver, to one where the people are active in continuously shaping the atmosphere. Next, the article shows how the norms and practices of illumination as an atmospheric element tie individual practices to collective identities and sense of community, ending with a brief discussion on the notion of atmospheric community.

2 ATMOSPHERIC PERCEPTION

To explain what an atmosphere is, it is common to relate to concrete experiences such as architect Peter Zumthor’s: “I enter a building, see a room, and—in a fraction of a second—have this feeling about it” (2006, 13), or by Teresa Brennan who opens up a popular book on affect by stating: “Is

there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and ‘felt the atmosphere?’” (2004, 1). Such examples illustrate how atmospheres appear as the most commonly recognizable individual experience of a space. In these and many other examples, atmosphere is about perception; that is, the way the world appears to a human being in the moment. The examples are used to highlight that atmospheres have a spatial existence, yet different from, say, a chair. As Gernot Böhme notes, quoting Hermann Schmitz, “Atmospheres are always spatially ‘without borders, disseminated and yet without place that is, not localizable.’ They are affective powers of feeling, *spatial bearers of moods*” (1993, 119). This does not make them any less ‘real’, at least from a phenomenological perspective. We sense them when we enter a church hall, a funeral, our home, or a party. They are always there, even if we do not sense their intensity. They ‘exist’, and their intensity can be weak or strong, but unlike a chair they must rather be seen as quasi-objective, or half-things, like the weather or the wind (Böhme 1998, 114; 2001, 59; 2006, 16; Schmitz 2014, 39). As Tonino Griffero notes, “why on earth, in fact, should solid and contoured bodies be more real than vague entities, which we experience without referring them to solidity, such as fluids, gas processes or even quasi-things like atmospheres?” (2014, 10). Atmospheres are real, and they may, as in the case of *hygge*, hold a central place in human lives. The task is thus to describe “a vague entity in a precise way” (Griffero 2014, 7).

Yet, if an atmosphere is the felt space, shaped by the co-presence of subject and object (Böhme 2001, 56), it must also be noted that the subject is a *person* shaped by upbringing and cultural norms, or what Böhme terms their socio-conventional character (Böhme 2014, 50). ‘Subjects’ are not just bodies, but cultural beings, who have learned to behave and sense in particular ways (Classen 1993; Howes 1991; 2015). That is, people experience an atmosphere not only physiologically but also in cultural ways, where norms of interacting and sensing people, places and things are embodied and enacted in everyday life. People learn through upbringing to see in particular ways, to be accustomed to a certain light, smell or sound in urban spaces and homes, only to become aware when it is somehow different. In a way ‘the right atmosphere’ is sensed and judged through a skilled sensuous apparatus (cf. Grasseni 2004). As it is generally held that an atmosphere is the “tempered space” (Bollnow 1963, 230) a human subject experiences in the immediacy of spaces, and the shifts between them, the case of *hygge* raises a different set of questions about how atmospheres are entangled in the affective character of everyday

practices and notions of community. How are such cultural practices and ideals materialized in everyday attunement of atmospheres? To explore these aspects, we turn to illumination practices in Denmark as they hold a central role in staging of *hygge*.

3 PRACTISING LIGHTNESS

The materiality of *hygge* is closely associated with ‘warmth’: a blanket, a flame, hot drinks. Aspects of material culture are, in this way, atmospheric generators of *hygge*. Light, in particular, as Hansen also noted in terms of the chandelier creating a unit, is used to create atmospheres, most notably in the term *hyggelys* (cosy light). This implies a dimmed, soft (2700 K) light with the distribution of plenty of candlelight to create spaces within spaces at the margins of attention. The average household in Denmark has one of the highest figures of lamps in Europe, which allows for a complex *lightscape* constituted by a varied distribution, level, glow, glare, shadow and quality of light. Artificial light is used throughout the day to connect sections of the home and to attune the inhabitants and spaces to make activities take place, and *hygge* is a common—although by no means the only—term used to describe the luminous staging of domestic atmospheres.

The orchestration of light is not simply about visibility, but about seeing in a certain way. This is perhaps best illustrated by Danes having the highest consumption of ‘living light’ (as candlelight is also called) in Europe.⁴ Even in the daytime, candlelight is used to create personal, cosy atmospheres and offer calming focal points of spaces within spaces through slight nuances of glow, contrast, smell, air quality and warmth. As philosopher Tor Nørretranders and artist Olafur Eliasson note, “you remember with your body how *hyggeligt* it is when you dim or turn off the evening light and light two candles on the table [...] Candlelight is also beautiful because it creates a bubble of light in the middle of the half-darkness” (2015, 82, my translation). Although it may be an exaggeration, Edwin Ardener even claims that “in order to activate Danish domesticity, there needs to be candlelight” (1992, 28, my translation). Light has the capacity to unite a room in a particular way beyond simply making it visible. Light,

⁴<https://www.bolius.dk/derfor-elsker-danskerne-stearinlys-24773/> (accessed 4.4.2016, although that year excluded Sweden, which normally uses around 4 kg per capita, compared to 5.79 kg in Denmark).

particularly the flickering flame, in this way becomes a way of visually carving out spaces that are not physically separated by, say, walls, to shape what Hansen noted as “a unit”. Böhme also notices this capacity when he states that “light is in itself something atmospheric that can fill an entire room, that wraps itself around things and embraces them” (2013, 135, my translation). Take, for instance, my informant Martin, a humanities student in his mid-20s, who explained how he often sits on the floor, where he creates ‘a tiny world’ for himself. He can reach the books around him, reach the hi-fi and press play and cuddle up with a duvet:

Those are the kind of small universes you can create, which to me is *hygge*. If you can create a tiny, tiny world for yourself and isolate yourself and say, “Now it is just me, and I don’t know, a book or something, right?” So you light up *this* area, and this is where *I* am. And it is great if there is sort of a small circle of darkness or at least darker illumination. Then you feel that “now it is all about this point,” and this is where we are concentrated. Shutting everything else out. Then nothing can stress or irritate or disrupt you. The surrounding darkness is all of the sudden there, embracing you with, like, a cosy layer, duvet, or cover. An embrace—a big lovely hug. I think that is *hyggeligt*. Darkness can be bloody *hyggeligt*.

Martin illustrates how light allows people to see, but darkness offers the ability to see *something* in a particular way. He highlights the demanding attention to interplaying qualities of light and darkness in shaping atmospheres, more than simply seeing light as opposition to darkness. Böhme (2017, chap. 20) makes an important critique of this opposition, and instead promotes the notion of *lightness* to emphasize qualities of light, to mimic the distinction between dark and darkness. As Böhme notes, “We see lightness not as an object but as a quality of the space that surrounds us” (2017, 199). While the notion of *lightscape* characterizes the scientific object of quantity and distribution of light in terms such as *kelvin*, *ra* and *lumen* and its distribution, *lightness* on the other hand promotes space as experience. This entails that it is not space as surfaces illuminated by beams of light through the spread of a lightscape, but as the embracing luminous quality of a space that surrounds us with glow, glare, brightness and so on, thus withdrawing the ‘objectivity of light’ to promote luminosity as an atmospheric element. To make such philosophical reflections more concrete, see the way Elina explains how she prefers to read in an armchair in the bedroom rather than in the living room:

I really like to sit there because, if I have the light on in the living room, I can see the glow [*skær*] through the glass door. It creates this effect of an extended room, and that there is a warmth in the room, in some way.

Here we see how lighting a room which she is not occupying is part of attuning an atmosphere through glow at the margins of her attention. It is about lightness, rather than mere surfaces being illuminated. It is a sense of being atmospherically embraced by light and dark. In terms of understanding the role of glow, she continues:

The 'living light' is particularly capable of catching and offering reflection [*genskær*, literally re-glow] in glass beads and glossy surfaces. Glow, I guess, is the—I was about to say product of light—but what is cast from the light source. It is probably the glow you register unconsciously, because it sort of implants itself. The glow from the coloured glass beads against the wall gives such a *hygge-lig*—I would almost say joyous—effect. It is the glow that creates the atmosphere—it is an 'attunner'. And it creates life, you could say.

These examples illustrate how lightness is about particular ways of establishing and experiencing atmospheric spaces, where light is cast *for* and not just *on* spaces (see Bille and Sørensen 2007; Bolt 2000); it is about spaces making sense within a cultural logic beyond mere visibility. Yet, there is more to it than merely questioning momentary perception. Illumination is part of a continuous *practice* of attuning spaces. Take, for instance, Martin again, who notes that:

When you are eating you need a lot of light. Later, when you are sitting and drinking coffee, I would then turn off some of the light. Light is, in a sort of way, part of creating the atmosphere surrounding what one is doing.

Or Elina, a high school teacher who often works in the evening and makes calls to her pupils' parents:

Then of course I need light so I can see, thus turning the light bright. Then when I am done, I also think I separate work-light from spare-time light, by turning it down again. Light affects the division of everyday life.

In this way, people do continuously light their room not only according to *what* is being done but also according to how that activity *should* feel. Elina and Martin illustrate the common observation among Danes that

reading a magazine and reading a work-related text, while functionally about reading, are actually two different kinds of attuned practices: work-reading and cosy-reading. In that sense, atmospheres, as they unfold through light, are not only perceived in the moment or staged for action to subsequently take place; they are practised in the continuous materialization of attuning lightness. Ingrained in the cultural practice of *hygge* is thus a sense of lightness that rests on a sensorium trained through upbringing and normalized through everyday life—even if, of course, it may be both variable and contested. We are in this way dealing with not only individual experiences of atmospheres but socio-conventional characters that may tie the individual to a larger collective way of sensing where glare is banned and glow is normalized in domestic lighting.

4 ATMOSPHERIC COMMUNITIES OF LIGHTNESS

While the above examples only refer to instances where an individual is orchestrating illumination, atmospheres are not only a matter of a co-presence of individual subject and objects. The notion of ‘collective atmospheres’ illustrates how atmospheres are also bound up in shared situations, such as festivities, crowds and protests (Anderson 2009; Anderson and Adey 2011; Borch 2012; Edensor 2012; Runkel 2018; Schmitz 2014, 60). As Angharad Stephens argues, “The concept of atmospheres leads us to think about how collectivities come together and disperse, about the spatial architectures that hold those collectivities together in time” (2015, 100). Viewed from this angle, atmospheres are the affective relationship or orientation shared by a collectivity of people (Großheim et al. 2014, 4–5). Such collective atmospheres are, in essence, temporary, often involving otherwise unrelated people who find themselves connected or directed towards a situation where their presence shapes the atmosphere of a place. Such a focus on collective atmospheres, however, may downplay a more detailed exploration of the ways atmospheres establish more long-term processes of identification, belonging and confirmation of norms. In their studies of collective affects in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Großheim et al., for instance, show how inhabitants talk with sense of community pride about the atmospheres of the old city as guests visit or comment on it (2014, 18).

Among my informants in Denmark, a different sense of community was expressed in terms of *hygge*. Rather than being aimed at some inherent quality of the built environment, the atmosphere was aimed at the ambi-

ent practices of the neighbouring residents shaping a changing environment. For instance, Nicole, a young student, would talk about how she would light candles in her window, when the otherwise unknown neighbours on the other side of the street would light theirs, and in this way feel that she was in contact with them, albeit at a distance and without any intention of getting to know them. In that way, her sense of home was established through crossing the borders between inside and outside at the margins of attention. Nicole felt that the lightness from other neighbours offered a nice atmosphere around her and the urban space, and she specifically invoked the notion of community when stating that the neighbours' light shaped a "sense of secureness and community" (for more details see Bille 2015). It is the very recognition of lightness that sets the base for a sense of community.

In similar vein, I would often find people who would either not draw the curtains in the evening or only pull them to the extent that they could still sense the light from outside coming in. Informants felt that the ability to see their neighbours moving around, at the margins of attention, was part of confirming sensory norms, as well as spreading a homely atmosphere onto the streets, establishing a sense of community (see also Ebbensgaard 2017). In this sense, the neighbour is someone who adds to (or subtracts from) the atmosphere of both home and urban space, through their practices—here specifically those practices that leave luminous traces. As Alberto Corsín Jiménez and Adolfo Estalella note, "The neighbor is not a stranger, nor a friend, nor kin but a form of sociality whose value is an effect of ambience-experimentation. The neighbor is an atmospheric person" (2013, 121).

The implication of such an 'atmospheric person' is important, as it shows that atmospheres are shaped not only by the presence of other people but also through the continuous atmospheric changes and practices people engage in. As Sarah Pink notes, it is through the practices "that residents engage in—which produce identities and embodied sentiments—that the idea of the community as a field of persons who have the potential to be connected to each other can be realized" (2008, 179). The sense of community that is established in extension and beyond the atmospheric person is located "in the sensory, embodied sociality that is integral to their place-making practices" (2008, 184). It was a sensuous-based atmospheric community, which was not only about taste and design but also about sensory imprints. There was no common goal, although a norm-based light practice existed in terms of *hyggelys*, and it did not delin-

eate a clearly defined community, or metaphysical or moral aim. It was more than an individual *being-in* space, but a *being-with* and the consciousness of an interpersonal connection through atmospheric practices, however ephemeral and impersonal it may be: a vague atmospheric community. It is a community sense that became part of establishing a sense of home and recognizing the role of the experience at the margin of attention, which had the recognition of a norm-based lightness as the base. In sum, the sense of community illustrated among my informants in Copenhagen was of a sensory type, one that emphasized practices and lightness.

5 THE ATMOSPHERIC NATION?

While the above section focuses on everyday practices, the beginning of the article illustrates that *hygge* is not just about such localized everyday practices. A community through *hygge* is also evoked at a national scale, as a cherished national trait of ways of being together. The idea of promoting a specific term for an atmosphere as a national trait raises a wide range of issues. Most often nationalism is seen as a claim to territory, the invention of tradition or symbolic ways of organizing sociality. But it may also entail the orchestration of atmospheres, as Stephens (2016) has shown in terms of atmospheric nationalism at the Olympics in London in 2012, where nationalism is the sort of atmospheric background through which actions and emotions are shaped (Billig 1995).

One way of understanding the sense of community that informants like Nicole who would light candles like the neighbour are talking about is to be inspired by Benedict Anderson's notion of *Imagined Communities* (1983), which denotes the sense of community shaped through cognitive and symbolic structures beyond social relatedness. Anderson argues that the nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1983, 6–7). This notion of imagined community allows us to look beyond social proximity as a defining factor, as also indicated by both Nicole on a small scale and the Canon of Denmark on a larger scale.

Yet, an imagined community remains a somewhat institutionalized, symbolic and cognitive construct, forming a 'we' in opposition to 'them'. Hence, while Anderson helps us understand how a sense of community may connect people who are not related through kinship or social ties, the

notion of imagined community leaves us ill-equipped to understand the aesthetic sensibility connecting self and other as an atmospheric unit. That is, how does a community, which does not necessarily have any other essence than the normalized sensorium of an atmospheric neighbour, come together? It is a sense of community experienced at the margins of attention, but not defined by institutional or territorial structures. There is not necessarily a collective ‘we’, or moral codex, yet there is a sense of togetherness. In this sense, it is a limited kind of community as it is based on collective sensory norms of *being-with* others, yet also unlimited as there are no clear borders. Thus, it is not quite a community in any traditional sense, but neither is it not a community, as the term (*fællesskab*) is indeed invoked by informants. It is, of course, also tempting to see it as a community bound up on taste (Bourdieu 1984), yet the point here is not the judgement of an aesthetic sphere of design, class, interests or properties (cf. Lash 1994, 157); it is a term clearly constructed at both political and discursive levels, but it is also tied to everyday practices. In particular, it relates to sensuous ways of orchestrating lightness whereby “it is a communality of forms (ways of behaving) whose content (meaning) may vary considerably among its members” (Cohen 1985, 20). It is not a strong community in the sense of necessarily identifying with being from this or that area. The atmospheric community may not even be based on a premise of difference from others or be essentialized with clear territorial borders. It is established by normalized ways of seeing the world at the margins of attention, such as sensing the sound, movement or light of the atmospheric neighbour. Accompanying the sense of community described above is a moral moulding of what counts as correct behaviour and ways of sensing, for instance, not staring through each other’s curtain-drawn windows. Likewise, it should be noted that there may similarly be established other kinds of atmospheric communities in areas with more varied lightscapes. The point is the acceptance and identification with such sensory engagements and effects. The particular atmosphere is, in this sense, not something essentialized or fixed but is continuously established through practices; the community is shaped through a normalized experience of lightness. By approaching community from an atmospheric perspective, a sensory element is added to the dominant discursive and symbolic approaches.

It is of course by no means unproblematic to invoke the concept of community to describe social collectivities. Community has been used to cover very diverse categories of sociality, from ‘traditional’ ways of life

under threat from modernity, to the national or transnational collectivities, or the more vague ‘social bonds’, reaching the point where one may be better off abandoning the term altogether (cf. Amit and Rapport 2002; Castells 1997; Delanty 2009; Turner 1966). Yet from the discussion above, and from the way the Canon of Denmark and informants like Nicole mention that light and *hygge* create a community (*fællesskab*), perhaps it is worthwhile to focus both on the community aspects of atmospheres and the identity processes they partake in. Beyond community as a discursive or narrative phenomenon, it could thus be worthwhile thinking about its atmospheric elements.

6 CONCLUSION

When the British media put a specific atmosphere on a pedestal as a pathway to happiness, it was largely through a focus on the materiality of *hygge*. This representation, however, underestimates how atmospheres, both in immediate sensation and in staging, may be a learned sensorium, practised and shaped through a sense of community by engaging with neighbours, and not only through national discourse of cultural distinctiveness. This chapter has moved beyond the ontological discussion about what an atmosphere is, to focus on the culturally informed practices atmospheres are entangled in. Through such a move, we may scrutinize how atmospheric generators, such as lighting, may be embodied, and explicate another way of thinking, where it is not lighting on surfaces but qualities of spaces that are central. This shifts the focus away from the ontology of individual objects to the way atmospheric elements appear, for instance, in terms of lightness. Beyond individual perception, atmospheres lead us to think about how collectivities come together, disperse and the ways in which they are held together. This may establish a sense of belonging through a process of identification with an atmospheric community shaped through a normalized experience and practices of lightness. This is in essence a different notion of community than a moral force, social kin or fixed identity; rather, it is a notion of community that enables people to insert themselves in a shared space through skilled vision and an atmospheric and embodied sociality at the margins of attention.

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PART IV

Aesthetics and Art Theory



Smell and Atmosphere

Gernot Böhme

1 THE ORIGIN OF THE CONCEPT OF *ATMOSPHERE*

Since the eighteenth century, the term atmosphere has been used in almost all European languages as a metaphor. Originally stemming from the field of meteorology, it designates the upper strata of air. The transition towards the metaphorical use is mediated by weather experiences (Böhme 2009). We experience certain weather through the moods it engenders in our minds: dull weather, joyful weather, the weather of springtime and so on. On the other side, a shift in mood in a certain area can be experienced as sort of weather change. Thus, in Goethe's tragedy *Faust*, Margarete returning to her room, where Faust and Mephisto had recently been present, says:

It's so close and sultry, here,
And yet it's not warm outside.
It troubles me so, I don't know why. (Goethe 1808, I, VIII, 2753–2755)

Hence *atmosphere* is the mood in a room or, speaking, more generally, a tuned space.

Hermann Schmitz analysed experiences like this in detail in the course of his new phenomenology. It is true; his view of atmospheres is deeply

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influenced by Rudolf Otto's concept of numinosity (1917). As a consequence, Schmitz emphasizes the fact that moods are not at all states of mind—he calls the latter personal involvements through bodily felt impacts. Moods, on the contrary, are quasi objective, and they are something spatial: “They are sort of impressive powers indefinitely spread into space” (Schmitz 1969, 361).

2 TELLENBACH: TASTE AND ATMOSPHERE

Tellenbach's book (1968) is the second source for the concept of atmosphere which today is familiar as a fundamental concept of aesthetics. Contrary to its title, the book mainly deals with smell. But, it is true that smell, besides taste, is one of the olfactory capacities. This may strike the average reader, but it has a good reason in what Tellenbach is going to say: for him, the experience of atmospheres belongs to natural, even physiological contexts. That means the experience of atmospheres is not at all a human-specific one. Many animals, especially mammals, identify their place and their kin through smell. The smell of the nest is their familiar cover in which they feel at home. The same is true with humans (Hauskeller 1995, ch. III). For the baby and the small child, the olfactory sense is the original relation to the world. During smelling and suckling, child and mother are—as to Tellenbach—still one: feeling each other secure and at the right place. In contrast, other smells and taste perceptions are felt alien and frightening.

Starting from this background, Tellenbach follows the further fates of olfactory experiences in human life. For this, sources in literature are very important for him, for example, Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*. Being a psychiatrist Tellenbach's interest is concentrated on pathogenetical developments. I instead prefer the novel of another Russian novelist, namely Nicolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1842). This contains a good example that smell—even for grown-up people—engenders the atmosphere of being at home and secure. Gogol's protagonist is Petrushka, the servant of Chichikov, who as a person of one of the lower classes accompanying his mate during his travels can expect neither room nor bed of his own. Through his personal smell he always has his home with him and he is happy this way.

Petrushka is introduced this way:

He liked not so much what he was reading about as the reading itself, or, better, the process of reading, the fact that letters are eternally forming some word, which sometimes even means the devil knows what. This reading was accomplished mostly in a recumbent position in the anteroom, on a bed and

a mattress which, owing to this circumstance, was beaten down and thin as a flapjack. Besides a passion for reading, he had two further customs, which constituted two more of his characteristic traits: to sleep without undressing, just as he was, in the same frock coat; and always to have about him a sort of personal atmosphere of his own peculiar smell, somewhat reminiscent of living quarters, so that it was enough for him merely to set up his bed somewhere, even in a hitherto uninhabited room, and haul his overcoat and chattels there, for it to seem that people had been living there for ten years. Chichikov, being a most ticklish man and even on occasion a finical one, when he drew in air through a fresh nose in the morning, would only wince and toss his head, saying: "Devil knows, brother, you're sweating or something. You ought to go to a bathhouse".

What is at stake here is the difference between civilized and not civilized. The process of civilization (Norbert Elias) brought forward an extended de-odourization. It was the hygienists and dietists, who in accordance with the upper class, propagated step-by-step general rules of behaviour, which caused a reduction of natural but also personal smells. The environment at home and on the streets became odour-free; the personal relations of people did no longer depend on how they smelt each other. The process has been extensively described by Corbin (1982). But this de-odourization of our environment and our social communications does not mean that our environment is totally free of smells. On the contrary, the vacuum is filled by perfumes and the odours of the deodorants, as well as of the smell of other hygienic products. What really vanished are the olfactory abilities and the possibility of orientation by means of odours. This may also mean we civilized people lost the competence in dealing with atmospheres—and thus an eventual impact of them may pathogenetically strike us. Most of Tellenbach's cases are of this kind. He tells us about cases of being affected in a way which no longer could be coped with by a detached and objective relation to the world.

The power of unlimited olfactory atmospheres has been described by Patrick Süskind (2010) in his novel *The Perfume*. Seen from the book, which scrutinizes the producing and reception of smells in detail—like in a laboratory—two important facts can be put down:

1. As a rule, one does not smell oneself. The reason is each experience of a quality fades away through habituation. Yet for Grenouille, the hero of the novel, this fact means that he has no smell of his own—and as a consequence being a professional perfumer, he creates for

himself a *human perfume*, in fact, several perfumes which—depending on his ambitions—would cause a sympathetic or antipathetical effect on people. Contrary to this, Tellenbach reports pathological cases of idiosyncratic self-perceptions of people who have—as a consequence of their idea of how they may smell—an impaired relation to the world.

2. Smells can be separated from their source—this is their atmospheric character: they tinge the space. Süskind enforces this trait by his hero Grenouille, killing young maidens in order to usurp their smell with the help of his perfume-technical practices. Using their skin, he produces an essence, the attractive and love-making effect of which nobody can resist.

3 SMELL AS AN ATMOSPHERIC EFFECT

Atmospheres can be produced, and one may enumerate objective facts which serve the raising of certain atmospheres. There is an impressive example for this, namely C.C.L. Hirschfeld's theory of gardening (1779). I myself enumerate five types of factors producing atmospheres:

- Sounds
- Light or colours
- Spatial structures and their suggestions to move
- Structures of surfaces and correlated synaesthesia
- Smells or more general: olfactory ingredients

In the generation of atmospheres, smells as factors have an extraordinary position. Tellenbach (1968, 46) says: "Smell is an atmosphere as such". As compared with other generation factors, smell is distinguished as being immediately effective: smelling something means being close to it. The source of the smell may be at a distance, but the smell itself is immediately smelt right here. This experience is quite different from seeing. In case I see a tree, I am seeing it there, where it is. Yet, smelling something, I have the smell in my nose. Further, smell cannot get shut off, whereas I can shut my eyes if I don't want to see a special item. You are much more exposed to smell as compared with other sense impressions—sounds and noise exempted. Further—and this is valid for all olfactory impressions—whatever you are smelling or tasting, it is given to you immediately with its emotional meaning. Speaking more strictly: in this

field, you cannot differentiate between a sign and its meaning. To take an example, as to the emotional effect of colours—Goethe is talking about the *sinnlich-sittliche Wirkung*—you may state what colour it is (this is red, this is blue) and then, according to the situation, you may feel a certain emotional effect. You may talk about a cold blueness or a warm redness, but this is not possible with smells. Their emotional value is intrinsically given with their sensual quality (Meyer 2002, 43 ff.).

The emotional value of olfactory qualities ranges via many degrees between attraction and rejection, between wanting to have it and repudiating it. This trait of smell and taste may be the reason why one packs both terms more generally to *taste*, which Moses Mendelssohn (1838, 143 ff.) translated into German as *Billigungsvermögen*, what is the faculty of appreciation or rejection. Taste never is just a statement about facts but in every case is an emotional reaction of approval or rejection, of desire or repudiation.

In fact, olfactory feelings have two modes—the intransitive mode and the transitive mode. Take smelling: if I smell something sweet, the term sweet does not mean an object but a quality. But smell quite often is used in the transitive mode: I smell roses. With this sentence, the source of the smell is identified. In analytical chemistry, this functional olfactory experience was even used for identifying substances—at least early on—before applying objective indicators. Even smelling in early times was used in diagnosis; the doctor identified the patient's disease through smelling.

Thus, because of the transitive mode, it may happen that olfactory experiences are broken in a way. That means that in the perspective of the source of a certain smell, its emotional quality is, in a way, jumped over or remains hidden. The reason is that the common deodorizing of our civilized world caused the olfactory faculties to become badly developed. Correspondingly, our faculties to express olfactory experiences are rather restricted. Fans of wine and gourmets may be excluded, but rather those people who professionally have to do with smells and flavours, that is, perfumers and coopers: their olfactory faculties are well trained, and they are able to talk about their experiences. As a rule, objects you relate to smells or flavours are associations, not the very sources of the olfactory experience you are talking about (Meyer 2002, 43 ff.). Objects you mention when characterizing certain olfactory experiences, as a rule, are not the sources of them but a more metaphorical description of them.

To conclude, we meet with olfactory experiences with a rather paradoxical situation: on the one hand, the senses of tasting and smelling can

lead—not only to appraisals—but to real judgements. But the devaluation of the olfactory, and its oppression with the process of civilization, has led to a situation in which we actually can be overwhelmed by them. This is true, in particular, with smelling. Here, already, Plato (*Phileb.*, 51 ff.) pointed to the fact that there must not be any desire to make smelling a joyful experience. Smelling, therefore, can be called a pure joy because it is not intermingled with desire. For example, the joyful experience of drinking only lasts as long you are thirsty. Following this line of appreciating, we can say of smell: the lack of distance within the experience of smelling can lead to totally getting lost in it, so that the atmosphere of smelling may become the world in which we are. Thus, the experience of smell can be the event of profane mystics.

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Atmosphere and Taste, Individual and Environment

Marco Tedeschini

The relationship between the human being and their environment has been investigated in many ways during the twentieth century. In this chapter, I claim that, in order to provide a proper clarification of the human-environment relationship, the concept of “atmosphere” has to refer to that of “taste”. First, I speculate as to whether these two concepts are incompatible. Second, I compare the two original theories of atmosphere. Third, I argue for their need for a concept of “taste”. Finally, I discuss the first systematic though non-philosophical usage of the concept of “atmosphere”, strictly related to that of “taste”, in order to show the relevance of the latter for understanding the relationship between individual and environment.

1 TWO INCOMPATIBLE CONCEPTS?

At first glance, the concepts of “atmosphere” and “taste” seem to be highly different. Nowadays, when one thinks about an “atmosphere” in philosophy, in the humanities and in the social sciences, one thinks about a feeling effused into a spatial dimension (Griffero 2010, 31). It could be

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added that, even if one knows nothing about such philosophical concept, the language-games concerning the word “atmosphere” do not let one associate this name otherwise than to something extended in space. Indeed, this term comes from the New Latin word *atmo-sphera*. However, it would be insufficient to think that such a word is a rational construct merging the two ancient Greek names “vapour” (*atmos*) and “globe shape” (*sphaira*). That something aerial has a round volume does not mean that we are dealing with an “atmosphere” (e.g., it could be a cloud or some fog). Also, as said, in the contemporary debate this name points to a sort of object that either surrounds or fills a portion of space and that we cannot perceive through our senses, even though we actually and clearly feel it. In order to better understand what an atmosphere is supposed to be, one needs to go back up to the early “ostensive teaching” (to put it with Wittgenstein 1953, 4) of this word and to show the relationship it has with the contemporary usage. Since we are dealing with a modern word, the “ostensive” character of the teaching is to be found in a detailed description. In English-language press, this modern construct first appeared in John Wilkins’ *The Discovery of a World in the Moone* (1638) (see Lewis 2012). I will now consider it, in order to understand how we have learnt to think of “atmosphere”.

Wilkins presents the name at proposition 10 of his book, written in early modern English, *That there is an atmo-sphera, or an orbe of grosse vaporious aire, immediately encompassing the body of the Moone*:

As that part of our aire which is neereſt to the earth, is of a tickier ſubſtance than the other, by reaſon ’tis alwaies mixed with ſome vapours which are continually exhaled into it. So is it equally requiſite, that, if there be a world in the Moone, that the aire about that ſhould be alike qualified with ours. (Wilkins 1638, 138–139)

This quotation concerns the context in which the first usage of the word “atmosphere” appeared. It is a description of the kind of air which is required in order to have “a world in the moon”. By “world” Wilkins means a place where there is (or at least can be) a form of life. Indeed, the general goal of his book consists in providing some argument for the idea that the moon is habitable. According to him, one of the conditions that would make the moon inhabitable concerns the quality of its “air”, which should be similar to that of the earth. As the air which is nearest to the earth is always mixed with some vapours exhaled by the latter, so the air which is nearest to the

moon should be equally mixed with its vapours. Therefore, Wilkins distinguishes between a form of pure air, and a form of mixed air, which is of a thicker and vaporous substance (“grosse”) and which is properly an orb encompassing a planet (be it the earth or the moon):

Now, that there is such an orbe of grosse aire, was first of all (for ought I can reade) observed by *Meslin* [Sic!], afterwards by *Keplar* [Sic!] and *Galileus*, and since by *Baptista Cisatus*, *Sheiner* [Sic!] with others, all of them confirming it by the same arguments which I shall onely cite [...]: 1. 'Tis observed, that so much of the Moone as is enlightened, is alwaies part of a bigger circle then that which is darker. Their frequent experience hath proved this, and an easie observation may quickly confirme it. But now this cannot proceede from any other cause so probable, as from this orbe of aire, especially when we consider how that planet shining with a borrowed light, doth not send forth any such rayes as may make her appearance bigger then her body. (Wilkins 1638, 139–140)

Reinforcing his position by recalling that Maestlin, Kepler, Galileo, Baptista Cisatus, and Scheiner all think that such form of mixed air exists on the moon, Wilkins makes their arguments his own. The first one consists in the empirical observation that the enlightened part of the moon always appears within a circle, which is bigger than that encompassing the dark side. As the planet shines with a borrowed light, the sole explanation of this fact can be that there is an orb of air which becomes visible through the light. The second argument is the following:

2. 'Tis observed in the Solary eclipses, that there is a great trepidation about the body of the Moone, from which we may likewise argue an Atmo-sphæra, since we cannot well conceive what so probable a cause should be of such an appearance as this, *Quod radii Solares à vaporibus Lunam ambientibus fuerint intercisi*, that the Sun beames were broken and refracted by the vaporous that encompassed the Moone. (Wilkins 1638, 140)

In this passage, Wilkins explains what is meant by the word “atmosphere”, which he first referred to with the Latin term: it is a hypothesised form of vapour which allegedly encompasses the moon. In other words, the “atmosphere” seemed to be the most probable cause of the fact that the moon appears to quiver during solar eclipses: such vapours encompassing the moon would have broken and refracted the sun rays. Wilkins explicitly quotes Scheiner (1630, 740, II) and translates his words from Latin into

English. In the same page, where we find Wilkins' quotation, Scheiner uses the word "atmosphæra" (without hyphen) in order to refer to those vapours, by which the sphere of the moon is "circumfusa", that is, surrounded. Therefore, the early "ostensive teaching" that, at the dawn of modernity, associated the name "atmosphere" with something vaporous that encompasses a planet (*à vaporibus Lunam ambientibus*) relies both on the observation and on the interpretation of the observed phenomena. In a sense, the word "atmosphere" relies on an inference insofar as one cannot properly see it.

Therefore, when Griffero (2010, 31) states that "atmospheres are indeed feelings, but mostly external ones, effused into a [...] spatial dimension", he correctly applies the rule associated with the term "atmosphere" even though he slightly modifies its original language-game. Indeed, the contemporary philosophical concept of "atmosphere" concerns our surroundings and the way we feel in them. Enriched by the idea of affectivity, the tight link between "atmosphere" and "life" is maintained, as well as that with the fact of "encompassing" something. Moreover, a form of "trepidation" is experienced in one's body as the proper form of encounter with an atmosphere. The difference consists in the fact that, instead of being observed, such trepidation is directly felt since an atmosphere "emotionally involves our lived-body" (Griffero 2013, xxi). In this sense, the philosophical concept of "atmosphere" provides a possible response to the issue of our involvement in the world we live in.

Both the philosophical and the ordinary concepts of "taste" are much more complicated. The relative language-game cannot be easily reconstructed in its origin. Notwithstanding this, one can mention a few traditional meanings of the term. First of all, "taste" may mean the bodily sense that makes one aware of the different flavours in one's mouth. At this level of analysis, most would be inclined to conclude that taste is either a sense where our singularity of personal subjects emerge or even the most individual and private of senses: *de gustibus non est disputandum*. Second, one may think of "taste" as a form of judgement. As well known, the modern European aesthetic tradition has tried to think of the judgement of taste under the light of the couple of subjectivity and universality (Zangwill 2014). Third, one may think of "taste" as a crucial element of societal life. Indeed, European modern (bourgeois) culture has undertaken the task of making taste a matter of social distinction, which therefore can be shared and actually favours recognition among members of the same group (see at least Bourdieu 1979; Gadamer 1960).

These three meanings are very different. The first one summarises a commonsensical stance, which represents a general and generic point of view based on the ordinary experience of the difference among tastes. Here “taste” deals mainly with our appreciation of food and drink. The second one corresponds to the modern philosophical project closely related to the issue of beauty, in particular on the universality of beauty and, conversely, of the universal possibility of recognising it. Contrary to the first one, the philosophical stance refers the concept of “taste” to the capability of recognising what is art and what is beauty. The third perspective on “taste” is a historical and sociological one, which has developed during the second half of the last century. It sheds light on the processes which have involved both the commonsensical and the philosophical stances on taste. On the one side, this means that the ability to recognise what art and beauty (and good food and drinks, and fashion, etc.) are is social. On the other side, that the very standard of what art and beauty (and good food and drinks, and fashion, etc.) are is also social.

These critical studies of European social and intellectual modern history have shown that food, drink, art and beauty were all functional to the construction of the “good society” (Gadamer 1960, 32), namely, the leading group of modern Europe—the bourgeoisie. In summary, “taste” concerns human beings while “atmosphere” concerns spaces where human beings can exist. “Taste” conceals a sort of judgement that expresses our (aesthetic) evaluation of an object. It works as a distinctive sign of membership to a certain social group. An “atmosphere” is a portion of “thicker space” either because it is a vaporous layer encompassing a planet or because it expresses a certain affective quality which we feel. On the one side, a subject judges and evaluates a certain situation or object. On the other side, the subject seems to mirror the expressive quality that the relevant portion of space exhibits.

The purposes expressed by both concepts, with their relative frameworks, seem to be highly different. In a word, they seem to be incompatible. In what follows, I aim to argue against such an idea.

2 TWO CONCEPTS, ONE ISSUE: ON ATMOSPHERES AND SPACE

Böhme (2017, 18) defines an atmosphere as a “*tuned space*, i.e. a space with a certain mood”. This means, as he then adds, that “atmospheres are always something spatial, and atmospheres are always something emotional” (Böhme 2017, 18). Behind the concept of “atmosphere” there is

the claim that there are emotional spaces. This claim has been developed in at least two ways (but see Griffero 2010, for an original synthesis and an innovative view).

The first one has been developed by Hermann Schmitz (1969) and has been summarised in Schmitz (1990, 275–320), to which I will refer here. According to it, atmospheres are a “chapter” of a more complex “Choriology”, that is, a theory of space. Schmitz claims that emotions are neither first and foremost *our* emotions, nor mental or bodily states, but rather they are forms of the surrounding space that we experience and live in (Schmitz 1990, 275, 308); they contribute to the structure and shape of our surroundings. According to Schmitz, “emotions” are “atmospheres”, that is, something “borderless poured out through” space, which *can* be emotional (Schmitz 1990, 292–293; my translation). Schmitz provides a taxonomy of those atmospheres that are also emotions:

As far as emotions are vast, I refer to them as *Moods*. All emotions are moods, even though *pure* moods do not have any directionality [...]. Pure moods [...] usually build the background or the basis of each emotional state. *Excitements* as atmospheres differ from pure moods. The former are characteristically formed by a specific kind of directionality, that is, a vectorial structure. Some of them are pure and diffuse excitements with no relation to any object. Some of them, however, are centred on an object [...]. (Schmitz 1990, 297; my translation)

All kinds of emotion are actually atmospheres in so far as they are vast. For this very reason, Schmitz generally refers to emotional atmospheres as moods. Moods (or emotional atmospheres) are of two kinds: “pure” moods, which are vast and are not endowed with directionality, and excitements, which are vast and endowed with directionality. Within excitements, Schmitz distinguishes those that are simply endowed with directionality (pure and diffuse excitement) from those that are endowed with directionality and are about something (excitement as object-centred emotions). Accordingly, for an excitement to be in relation to an object, it should be at least endowed with directionality. This means that an excitement (e.g., joy) is directional, be it about something (centred emotion) or not (pure excitement). Schmitz defines the directionality of an excitement as the “suggestions of motion that pre-delineate gestures, including gestural bodily attitudes” (Schmitz 1990, 305; my translation), which one experiences when feeling such a kind of mood or emotional atmosphere.

In other words, Schmitz conceives of this directionality as a force, which is not mine, that suggests (or even urges) me to “follow” its direction: “for example, affliction is so huge for the afflicted person that she feels tiny. It is like a big gloomy cloud, which wraps her up, or like an overwhelming burden that brings her down” (Schmitz 1990, 305; my translation). These “wrapping up” and “bringing down” are suggestions of motion that one feels and “follows” or, conversely, that stir one up. According to Schmitz, both excitements and centred emotions can “wrap up” and/or “bring down” those who experience them. What changes is whether the atmosphere is related to one or more objects. Centred emotions are related to objects: this means that the vectorial structure also “contains” one or more objects by “centring the directions diffuse in the space of emotions” (Schmitz 1990, 309; my translation). The third class of atmospheres, that of pure moods, refers to those that have neither a vectorial structure nor a relation to any object. They constitute the background of every emotional state, that is, they always accompany our emotional life.

Now Schmitz claims that neither the subject nor the object are sources of atmospheres:

There can be no question about the fact that the afflicted person has a source in themselves [...] from which their affliction besets them. It differs from the source of the—lasting, lurking, or staring—glance that they cast at something [...]. One cannot cast one’s affliction: one rather gives in to it, where this giving in is the bodily and affectively perceptible getting-into-an-atmosphere. [...] Affliction burdens one like a mass without borders or origin. Its object, if any, is not its source in the same sense in which one speaks of a source of light or of sounds: rather it is a nucleus of crystallisation, on which such emotion is centred [...]. (Schmitz 1990, 306; my translation)

Neither the person concerned by an atmosphere nor the object on which it centres can generate the atmosphere. According to Schmitz, such relations are “contingent” (Schmitz 1990, 306; my translation): one “gets into” an atmosphere, which has “no origin”. This means that atmospheres do not ontologically or logically depend on any other being that either produces or founds them. All pure moods, excitements and centred emotions—all atmospheres—therefore contribute to shape and form the surroundings of the person concerned, and actually involve them, not as if they were an entity *in* such environment, but rather as spatial element *of* this environment. To sum up, Schmitz’s atmospheres seem to be spatial

entities rather than entities in space. This means that they make a space emotionally surround the things and the living beings within it, with the consequence that we also live in emotional (i.e., affectively tuned) spaces.

The second way of thinking of atmospheres as “spaces with a certain mood” is that of Gernot Böhme (2017, 48). Let’s quote his definition:

Atmosphere is the common reality of the perceiver and the perceived. It is the reality of the perceived as the sphere of its presence and the reality of the perceiver, insofar as in sensing the atmosphere s/he is bodily present in a certain way. This synthetic function of atmosphere is at the same time the legitimation of the particular forms of speech in which an evening is called melancholy or a garden serene.

According to Böhme, an atmosphere is a *medium*: it “mediates objective factors of the environment with the aesthetic feelings of human being” (2017, 16). Böhme describes the atmosphere as a “common reality” or a “synthetic function” in order to stress the fact that there is no third entity between perceiver and perceived but rather a “prototypical ‘between’-phenomenon” (Böhme 2017, 56) that appears when a subject is before an object or before an objective arrangement. The former and the latter are entities per se, that is, autonomously existent, whereas an atmosphere appears if and only if the two poles of perception are “co-present” (Böhme 2017, 56), lasting until they are effectively co-present. One may conclude that atmospheres are the effect of the real relationship between a subject and an object, where “effect” means that atmospheres “proceed from”, or are “created by” (Böhme 2017, 46), this encounter in which the perceived environmental qualities and the mental states of the perceiver give birth to an atmosphere.¹ Indeed,

in order to perceive something, [...] something must be there, it must be present; the subject, too, must be present, physically extant. From the perspective of the object, therefore, the atmosphere is the sphere of its perceptible presence. Only from the perspective of the subject is atmosphere perceived as the emotional response to the presence of something or someone. Aesthetics thus becomes the study of the relations between ambient qualities and states of mind [...]. (Böhme 2017, 58)

¹ See also Gumbrecht (2011a, x): “I have attempted to describe *Stimmung*, the relationship we entertain with our environment, as a presence-phenomenon—the ‘lightest touch that occurs when the material world surrounding us affects the surface of our bodies.’”

According to Böhme's view, the concept of "atmosphere" solves the subject-object dichotomy and gives a new shape to aesthetics itself. With respect to the first point: by introducing such concept one circumvents the difficulty of understanding the aesthetic relationship between the subject's mental states and the environmental qualities. For example, assertions like "this evening is melancholy" or "this garden is serene" are adequate to what they are referring to since the concerning atmospheres make such statements true. Traditional aesthetics (along with modern philosophy) explains such statements as metaphorical and referred them to one's mental states, as if one were cut off from one's surrounding environment regardless of one's actual perception. Better said, traditional aesthetics suspends the validity of the subject's perception *qua* perception of the affective qualities widespread in space, making it something entirely subjective and independent from the object: "and in fact this is what happens when we regard the serenity of valley or the melancholy of an evening as projections, that is, as the projection of moods, understood as internal psychic states" (Böhme 2017, 42). But projections of moods have no inherent relation with the corresponding environment, be it a valley or an evening. According to Böhme, this is "counter-phenomenal" (2017, 42), that is, inconsistent with our experience. Therefore, the "atmosphere" is first of all the conceptual tool that is able to recompose an actual communication between subject and object. It can do so because it is conceived as both the sphere of the perceptible presence of the object *and* the emotional response of the subject in front of it. In other words, an atmosphere is the way in which the subject senses the object and, in this very sensing, senses themselves at the same time.

From this point of view, aesthetics addresses the relationship between environmental qualities and states of mind, as it rehabilitates the validity of our perception, making what we feel in our environment something that depends on us but also on its qualities. This brings us to the second point at stake in Böhme's long passage quoted above. Aesthetics takes a new shape as a theory of perception, where "perception" no longer means only "information processing, provision of data or (re)cognition of a situation [... but] includes the affective impact of the observed" (Böhme 2017, 53). On this path, aesthetics becomes able to respond to the so-called aestheticisation of our life-world: the fact that our reality is more and more a matter of staging, that is, of production of atmospheres (Böhme 2017, 148–150). Accordingly, (new) aesthetics' focus

on atmospheres opens up a field of research whose purpose is to describe the relationship of dependence between human emotional reactions and the environment, which is the object of aesthetic labour. Böhme (2017, 148) defines the latter as “the totality of those activities which aim to give an appearance to things and people, cities and landscapes, to endow them with an aura, to lend them an atmosphere, or to generate an atmosphere in ensembles” (on this topic, see also Böhme 2016). Design, architecture, cosmetics, advertising, art and all aesthetic production belong to the class of activities that, in a sense, “intensify life” (Böhme 2017, 149), insofar as they combine real properties to produce a certain effect on the observer. Therefore, aesthetics provides knowledge about that and, above all, justifies and clarifies why such disciplines actually make us feel in this or that way.

According to Böhme, therefore, one may predict the atmospheric effect that a certain thing or environment will have on someone. Schmitz and Böhme diverge the most exactly on this issue. Schmitz does not admit any (re)producibility of atmospheres, while Böhme is convinced that this is possible. This contrast is due to some theoretical differences in their conception of what an atmosphere is, as Schmitz thinks that atmospheres are founded neither on the object they may refer to (when there is one) nor on the subject that perceive them. Accordingly, for him atmospheres are spatial *and* emotional entities that encompass us and the things that make our environment; they contribute to affectively changing the environment in which one is at a certain moment by tuning it in certain way. At the opposite side, Gernot Böhme thinks that atmospheres depend both on the subject, who properly experiences an emotional response, and on the object, for the properties that arouse a certain emotional response in the subject belong to the object and/or to the environment. So, an atmosphere is the effect of their co-presence, an effect that one can investigate and try to reproduce. Therefore, the atmosphere is localized between the subject and the object; the subject and object ontologically encompass the atmosphere and are its proper origin, whereas the atmosphere binds the subject and object together aesthetically. In sum, if Hermann Schmitz is thinking of a (new) form of space, Gernot Böhme seems to be more in search of a medium in order to overcome the dichotomy between subject and object in aesthetics. Two different starting points which overlap on one idea: that space is—in their words—tuned.

3 TASTE, ATMOSPHERES, AND AESTHETICS

As discussed, Gernot Böhme conceives of the concept of “atmosphere” as a crucial tool to rethink of aesthetics. He sees his new aesthetics as a way to deeply understand and criticise the contemporary aestheticisation of reality and as a theory of how we perceive things and environments, which is opposite to any aesthetics of judgement or aesthetics of the work of art (Böhme 2017, 33–36). With different purposes, Schmitz conceives of “atmosphere” as a crucial chapter of his theory of space.

Things thus standing, it comes as no surprise that the concept of “taste” is pushed to the background. These authors do not pay attention to it and do not focus on the relationship that the latter seems to have with that of “atmosphere”. Instead, I claim that “taste” is necessary in both theoretical frameworks, in order to properly understand the relationship between human beings and their environment that the concept of “atmosphere” is supposed to widely clarify or even fully explain. Both Schmitz and Böhme address “taste” to deal with the social issue of grouping. According to Böhme (2016), taste emerges as an effect of a twofold historical process concerning, on the one side, the dissolution of hierarchies in capitalistic societies and, on the other side, the growth of an economy based on aesthetic preferences. In order to “define their membership of social groupings”, people “differentiate themselves in terms of music preferences, dress style, and branding” (Böhme 2016, 69). Aesthetics is still somewhat related to taste, but the latter is no longer one of its central concepts. Schmitz is much more radical. He considers taste within the (ontological rather than social) framework of law since taste is a “disposition” (1990, 385; my translation) that “stabilizes the *culture of rights*” (Schmitz 1990, 397; my translation), where “right” entails the sphere of customs as well as that of law and of politics. In this view, “taste” has nothing to do with aesthetics: it belongs to a chapter of the wider field of Schmitz’s practical philosophy (1990, 321–438). Thus, taste is a form of sensitivity for “succeeding” in finding, within an atmospheric environment, the way to what is just and fair: the way to act, indeed, rightly. That’s because Schmitz thinks that taste needs a “sharpening training” (Schmitz 1990, 397; my translation). Consequently, “taste” is both something that we are born with and something to be trained—a competence.

Starting from Schmitz’s stance, I claim that taste clarifies one’s relationship to one’s environment, and particularly one’s relationship to one’s atmospheric environment. But let us come back to Böhme’s view on taste.

Here, one can hardly understand how it is that one has and expresses aesthetic preferences, without presupposing some “atmospheric competence” (Griffero 2013, 50) through which one actually chooses or picks between different objects and, therefore, different atmospheres.² Böhme recognises “an extraordinarily rich wealth of knowledge of atmospheres in the practical knowledge of aesthetic workers. This knowledge must be able to give us insight into the connection between the concrete properties of objects (everyday objects, artworks, natural elements) and the atmosphere which they radiate” (2017, 49). Böhme does not seem to recognise a similar set of competences with regard to those who enjoy the aesthetic products of these workers and live in their same world. But, as Böhme himself states, expressing aesthetic preferences, at least in the current aesthetic economy, is a matter of distinction as well as of identification and membership. Therefore, differentiation and identification go hand in hand here—something that seems to be valid both in the social sphere and in the individual sphere, as we will see in the next section. Still, if taste is a matter of grouping and concerns some competence on what distinguishes and makes a social group recognisable, it is very plausible to think that group members develop their own aesthetic preferences on the basis of some competences that are developed within the group itself and that concern the effect (i.e., the atmosphere) that the properties of an object produce, be it accepted or rejected. These competences may not be as technical as those of aesthetic workers, but they make one able to aesthetically express one’s membership to the group in the right way. Indeed, one who expresses an (aesthetic) preference is able to evaluate the atmospheres one finds and to choose the right one to rightly express such membership.

This situation recalls that described by Schmitz in a different context. According to Schmitz, “taste” makes sense only in the sphere of rights, for it has to do with the right choice. Therefore, taste as a human disposition requires training to become more and more sensitive and aware about the atmospheres that surround and affectively involve us. This training must be spontaneous at the beginning, as it simply coincides with living in one’s own (cultural) environment. For this reason, it cannot be properly called “training”, as the latter always implies a conscious decision that turns an

² Griffero (2013) seems to attribute “atmospheric competences” only to aesthetic workers. Instead, I find it plausible to extend the concept to everyone who is exposed to atmospheres, notwithstanding the clear difference one has to presuppose between aesthetic professionals and people without professional knowledge.

ordinary and generic competence into a deep and technical one. Taste as a disposition concerning the right choice within the emotional environment is to be consciously developed. Still, Schmitz uses the concept of “taste” to describe the birth and stabilisation of a culture of rights. This depends on the fact that Schmitz does not concede to Böhme that the environment where one lives in is to be thought of in aesthetic terms. Both recognise that aesthetics is no longer a pillar of the bourgeois cultural and educational system, but Schmitz’s philosophical system describes it as a “crumbled discipline” that gathers different topics (Schmitz 1990, 455; my translation). Accordingly, this is a historical result that makes it easy to collect under that name literature and art as well as a few related topics like the pleasure they arouse or the meaning of a work of art. From this point of view, “taste” does not seem to belong to aesthetics insofar as it does not refer to (or, let alone, identify with) aesthetic pleasure, which is conceived as a particular kind of pleasure that happens in front of aesthetic constructs (i.e., mostly artworks). Nor does “taste” deal with the recognition of a work of art, and it is not elicited by beauty either. Indeed, what turns an aesthetic construction into a work of art is the age in which it is considered (Schmitz 1990, 485). Therefore, there is no work of art *per se* that would be able as such to transcend both its proper age and the age that looks at it as a work of art. Yet, this seems to be highly controversial.

I would stress that one cannot disregard the ontological properties of an aesthetic construct and the presupposed competence to recognise them. Indeed, Schmitz (1990, 460) writes: “With regard to form, a literary text is ambitious. [...] This may be specified through the feature of its susceptibility to translation. Non-literary texts that are ambitious with regard to their content can be translated into every language and expanded as needed without loss, e.g. a book on Chemistry. On the contrary, by translating either a lyrical poem, or one of Cicero’s speeches, or a refined prose [...] something important goes missing.” Schmitz’s distinction between literary and non-literary texts through the feature of susceptibility to translation is rather disappointing. That one cannot fully translate a literary text into another language is a truism that relies on a broader truism, that is, that one cannot translate any text into another language without loss. In both cases the loss consists in the original language with its structures and signs. Yet, Schmitz would reply that the language loss concerning the translation of a book of Chemistry is not relevant, while that of Cicero’s speech is indeed relevant, because in this second case the form of the language mat-

ters. However, he should then explain why it matters only in this second case, since one could also be satisfied with the simple translation of the contents from classical Latin into modern English. In other words, what is it that really matters and goes missing in the translation of Cicero's Latin? Schmitz would answer that what gets lost is the "formal ambition" of his texts and maybe the age in which they were conceived of and written down. Still, one could ask again to clarify such ideas, and so on. In short, the point is that Schmitz presupposes that what is lost in the translation of a literary text is something in the form, which is "important" and is immediately recognisable in the light of the age or, as he writes elsewhere, of the "climate" (Schmitz 2011, 118–120) in which the text was written. The problem is that in order to grasp the important thing that goes lost in translation, one has to be competent in the topic, the same way as one needs to be competent in order to grasp the attunement between the artwork and its age. Artistic and literary concepts and objects are both cultural and ontological; therefore, people who are able to make and recognise a work of art need to be competent in both these sides. At least, in order to create the *right* artwork or to *rightly* receive it.

Finally, one can hardly avoid referring to the concept of "right" even in the aesthetic sphere. For this reason, it is not enough to say that if an aesthetic construction is a work of art, this depends on the age in which it is considered to be such. This becomes particularly clear if one considers Gumbrecht's (2011b, 11) stance. Reflecting on the concept of "atmosphere", he apparently goes in the opposite direction to Schmitz. Indeed, Gumbrecht identifies "atmosphere" with "Stimmung":

An ontology of literature that relies on concepts derived from the sphere of *Stimmung* does not place the paradigm of representation front-and-center. "Reading for *Stimmung*" always means paying attention to the textual dimension of the forms that envelop us and our bodies as a physical reality—something that can catalyze inner feelings without matters of representation necessarily being involved. Otherwise, it would be unthinkable for the recitation of a lyrical text or the delivery of a prose work with a pronounced rhythmical component to reach and affect even readers who do not understand the language in question.

Gumbrecht addresses the issue of the ontology of texts. He criticises the paradigm of representation insofar as it is the basis of the practice of reading and of text evaluation. "Representation" means here that a text represents an "extra-linguistic reality" (Gumbrecht 2011b, 11).

Gumbrecht tackles this view by stressing that the textual dimension itself is made by its forms (in a classical lyrical poem, e.g., its stanzas, verses, feet, and the way the words are grouped together). Accordingly, this explains why recited texts, or some performances, can reach and affect people even though they do not speak the language of such texts and performances. In this view, “texts and artifacts soak up the atmosphere of their times. In both aesthetic and historical terms, however, everything depends on the degree to which texts absorb them and the intensity with which acts of reading and reciting make these moods present again” (Gumbrecht 2011b, 52). Gumbrecht thinks of the relation between text and history as mediated by the atmospheres which are absorbed by the former. However, what this means is all but clear, and the sole indication provided by him consists in the idea that “moods and atmospheres [...] present themselves to us as nuances that challenge our powers of discernment and description, as well as the potential of language to capture them” (Gumbrecht 2011b, 9). Again, it seems necessary to train such receptive as well as productive powers in order both to rightly recognise such nuances (the right ones, since not every atmosphere which is *in* its time is an atmosphere *of* its time, as authors and artists well know) and to capture them and make them rightly absorbed by texts and artworks.

Aesthetics and the sphere of rights seem to need the same disposition in order to achieve their social and cultural functions and to properly take into account the phenomena of our environment to which they refer. I claim that such a disposition needs to be thought of in terms of “taste”. Schmitz provides a good albeit partial description of the latter. When the concept of “atmosphere” first appeared, it was tightly connected with that of “taste” precisely with regard to the relationship between someone and their environment. The later philosophical usage has instead kept them separate. In what follows, I will come back to this first usage and I will argue for bringing back together these two now faraway concepts.

4 TASTING ATMOSPHERES: ON HUBERTUS TELLENBACH’S *TASTE AND ATMOSPHERE*

Tellenbach (1968) provided the first conceptual endeavour concerning atmospheres. In his book, he linked “atmosphere” and “taste” to the purpose of identifying the birth of some psychopathological diseases. According to Tellenbach, “taste” in both a cultural and a physiological sense represents a diagnostic criterion to grasp them. I will not analyse

Tellenbach's claim that "taste" primarily serves to provide psychopathological diagnoses rather than any rational and objective description, nor his claim that the latter is not able to recognise a psychic illness in its *statu nascendi*. Rather, I will focus on Tellenbach's description of the relationship between taste and atmosphere. My prime interest in his analyses consists in showing the crucial role that taste has in one's relationship with the environment—a relationship that, in this context, is mediated by the atmosphere.

As his book has not been translated into English, I will refer to an article he published in English a few years later (Tellenbach 1981): it sums up the first two chapters of his book, which are indeed the relevant ones to my purpose. Tellenbach (1981, 222) underscores the general problem that underlies the issue of the atmosphere: "We might try to establish what *kinds of relationships exist between the environment and the self*." Despite this general purpose, he immediately reduces the scope of its investigation by asking "*how they are constituted by certain situations induced through smelling and tasting*". Therefore, Tellenbach aims to identify the kinds of relationships existing between the environment and the self and to retrace the constitutional process that establishes them through smelling and tasting. Accordingly, smell and taste attune the self and their environment in four ways (Tellenbach 1981, 222–224): that of "*prejudice*", as they urge us to give a positive or negative verdict on objects; that of "*proximity*", as they show a character of "intimacy" insofar as "the subject blends with the world" when they smell and taste; then there is the way in which time appears in them, as the present "*moment*", as an occasion arousing memories ("*repetition*"), and, even though it only regards the olfactory sense, as "*fragrance forecasting something*, [...] a coming event". Finally, the fourth way involves smell and taste, which are "*protective and cautionary*" senses since they judge whether something is edible or not.

These relations are mainly based on the smelled atmosphere, which Tellenbach (1981, 226) defines as the "fragrance [... in which there is] something more than mere sense qualities". The atmosphere is precisely this "*surplus, which lies beyond the actual fact of the experience, but which we sense as belonging to it*" (Tellenbach 1981, 227). Along with the sense qualities of the object, smell reveals the atmosphere it radiates as a *surplus*.³ The

³Tellenbach (1968, 47) specifies that only organic objects (individuals, groups, landscapes, cultures) radiate an atmosphere. Inorganic objects cannot radiate it, unless they are endowed with a spiritual intention, for example, art. Of course, neither Schmitz nor Böhme would agree with such a "restrictive" stance.

atmosphere is therefore something different from the fragrance, though it appears with it but goes beyond it. As smell immediately refers to the object that indeed smells and to its actual properties, the atmosphere tells one “about the inherent nature of the thing” (Tellenbach 1981, 227).

Like Böhme, Tellenbach roots the atmosphere in beings by anchoring it to their qualities (particularly smell) and by describing their appearance as their radiation or emanation from an object. Contrarily to him, though, he claims that atmospheres belong to what or who radiates them expressing their nature. An atmosphere is not a common reality between subject and object: it is the very individual nature of the being that irradiates it and this is the only way for us to immediately sense such nature. This does not mean that two entities cannot share a same atmosphere, or influence each other, or merge their single atmospheres into a third one, which is common to them. Rather, it simply means that the atmosphere is not conceived as an in-between phenomenon. Moreover, one should keep in mind that Tellenbach introduces the concept of “atmosphere” for psychopathological purposes, while Böhme has aesthetic and ontological concerns. Indeed, Tellenbach’s interest seems to consist in better understanding the relationship between the self and its environment, so as to single out the kind that prevents the development of pathologies (particularly, schizophrenia) in human beings. In this context, the idea that the atmosphere is “a medium of preverbal and prereflective elemental contact” (Tellenbach 1981, 229) first of all serves for identifying the dimension of human life where both diseases and pathologies begin. Only secondarily does this definition mean something that allows for one’s contact with their environment before language and thought. The idea is that diseases and pathologies are rooted in preverbal and pre-reflective life.

According to Tellenbach (1981, 230), this happens when something goes wrong in the child’s relationship with the mother and the family:

It is the atmosphere of the mother, into which the child enters—as into a protective aura which envelops its growth. This aura, which later widens into the aura of the family, establishes the capacity for a reliable discerning sense of atmosphere as regards the qualities of fellow men [...]. It is the beginning of an incalculable to-and-from movement between the radiation of an “air” which characterizes a human being in his personality—and the subtlety and sureness of receptivity for the emanations of others, in which we sense, *prior* to all words, whether the other person deserves to be trusted

or not. The confidence with which a child learns this most subtle of all games is commensurate to its ability of learning how to bestow trust in the proper way. (Tellenbach 1981, 230)

In this quotation, the crucial concept is that of “trust”. In the best case, the child learns to either trust or distrust another human being or group on the basis of the elemental (atmospheric) contact prior to all words, if it grows up in an aura that makes it feel protected. And this aura widens along with the child’s development: first, its mother; second, its family. In this atmosphere the child finds the proper environment to learn to recognise who someone is in their personality (their atmosphere) and whether they deserve trust. Tellenbach describes such situation as a subtle game where the intellectual focus of language and thought do not seem to come into play. This moment is crucial insofar as what’s at stake is the proper way to bestow trust on fellow people. Indeed, “a child can have confidence because it trusts that its parents will not desert it. This is a basic condition of being a child, and cannot be tampered with without incurring seriously disturbing consequences to the child” (Tellenbach 1981, 229). Not to let a child develop confidence in its mother or family will bring disturbing consequences in its life, concerning the ability to sense when someone deserves to be trusted or not. In its first atmosphere, a child develops its discerning sense of atmosphere as regards the qualities of others, who can be either reliable or unreliable. It is at this point that Tellenbach ties together trust, the discerning sense and taste:

The *nucleus* of the baby’s mother-experience is established by its tasting what it receives from her. We spoke of the *nucleus* because what is offered in fragrance, is condensed into taste. And yet, in this fragrance something more than mere sense qualities pass from the mother to the child, since, in this fragrance, the child senses also the personal nature of its mother, her atmosphere. (Tellenbach 1981, 226)

As fragrance is condensed into taste, by tasting its mother the child receives her entire atmosphere from her. Trust relies on such a core insofar as this is the anchoring point for a baby to develop its confidence in its mother. Taste is the *locus* where the child knows its mother, that is, where it starts to know what is *not* its mother. With this fundamental differentiation, what’s at stake is the ability to properly discern who really deserves trust.

Indeed, taste is “the basis of its [the child’s] first experience and discernment of the world” (Tellenbach 1981, 225). Now, according to Tellenbach,

There are common forms of life prior to all thought and speech. Through atmosphere people recognize those that belong to their particular world. While in the animal world it is the dominant olfactory sense which draws invisible, but sharp and effectual lines of demarcation, in the human world it is the sense of atmosphere which serves this purpose. Thus it is *that* type of emanation which our atmospheric sense-perception advises us to accept or reject which reliably tells us to what kind of atmosphere we think we belong or, in other words, how we understand ourselves. (Tellenbach 1981, 229)

The ability to properly (or *rightly*) bestow trust, which relies in the ability to recognise others’ atmospheres, is at the heart of our sense of belonging to a particular world. One’s atmospheric sense-perception advises one to accept or reject one’s atmosphere, revealing to what kind of atmosphere someone (including ourselves) belongs. Prior to all thought and speech, the atmospheric sense-perception lets one understand whether one belongs to one’s world or not. As seen above, this ability emerges in the core of the baby’s mother experience and, particularly, in taste, where one’s mother’s atmosphere is condensed. The reason for that, as Tellenbach (1981, 226) stresses, is to be found in the fact that “the tasting ability of a child is introduced to things that the taste of another has performed—be it God’s, nature’s or man’s taste. Thus ‘taste’ is simultaneously educator and the object of education.” The deep sense of Tellenbach’s statement is that a whole culture is condensed in taste, which is therefore both educator (the taste of the mother, the family, the social group) and object of education (the taste of the child). There is no pure taste abstracted from such circular teaching and learning process.

Following Tellenbach, one may add that, from the very beginning of one’s existence, taste is our means for developing a sense of a trustful relationship and even, in a sense, of a kinship with our environment. As Tellenbach (1981, 226) puts it, recalling Gadamer (1960), “Whatever is offered to the tongue or the mind, it [taste] always is part of a culture, and as such always a projection of the taste of a specific social unity, of an ‘educated society’.” Taste always conceals a sense of “unity”. Indeed, the idea of “unity” is always at stake with that of taste. But “unity” does

not have an ontological meaning here. There is no actual fusion with the environment (e.g., no fusion between the baby and the mother). Nobody belongs to their environment as a part or even a property of it. Being part of an environment, in this perspective, means feeling like a part of it. When feeling differs from being, we leave ontology and step into aesthetics.

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Renga and Atmosphere

Tadashi Ogawa

Many philosophers, not only in Japan but also in Europe have a strong interest in poetry. Goethe was not only a poet but also a philosopher. And philosophy itself is not science but love for knowing many things or the wish to know much more. This is what the Greek called the “philomathes” or “philosophia.” Therefore, many philosophers in the world showed this interest in poetry, such as Martin Heidegger who was much interested not only in the work of Hölderlin and Rilke but also in Trakl. Famous and important Japanese philosophers, for example, Nishida Kitarō or, Watsuji Tetsurō and Kuki Shūzō, loved poetry and poetical works very much. Philosophy and poetry have a common root: interest in the world and the human being.

I myself have much interest in poetry. In my student time, I kept a poetical notebook. At that time, I thought that poetry was centred on the singing subject and that the centre of poetry was the subject, the singing ego. But this turns out not exact. There is another possibility to compose poetry, that is, the form of *renga*.

Since *renga* is now largely forgotten, I start with a brief description of its structure. *Renga* is a form of concatenated poetry in which many participants collaborate. A single sequence of *renga* is like a picture scroll, consisting of many strophes called *ku*, which are the minimum units of *renga*. By creating *ku*, the collaborators called *renju* participate in the

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formation of *renga*. A *ku* is roughly equivalent to a strophe or stanza in a Western poem. Furthermore, there are two kinds of *ku*—a longer *ku* consisting of three alternating lines of 5-7-5 moras (the counterpart of English syllables), and a shorter *ku* possessing two lines of 7-7 moras. *Renga* also follows rules of succession: normally the longer *ku* is followed by the shorter *ku* in an alternating succession that recurs until the end of a scroll of *renga*. The combination of one longer *ku* (5-7-5) and a shorter one (7-7) constitutes what we call the traditional Japanese *waka* poems, with a total of 31 moras.

In this light, let us first examine the beginning of the *haikai no renga* (comical linked poetry) titled “Watching cherry blossoms” in *Hisago* (The Gourd), one of the so-called “seven anthologies of Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694)” (*Bashō Shichibushū*). Bashō himself composed the opening *ku* (*hokku*) of the sequence (Matsuo 1966, 155–157):

Under the trees
both the soup and the fish
melt into cherry blossoms.

In response to this *ku*, the poet Chinseki attached the shorter *ku*:

The setting sun serene
it's a fine day.

These two *ku* combined have the same form of a *waka*, but unlike *waka*, they are the joint work of two poets, who collaboratively create a chained sequence. Typically, participants in *haikai no renga* end up producing a combination of thirty-six alternating longer and shorter strophes, which is called “rolling a thirty-six *renga*.” Sitting together for about three hours, the collaborators (*renju*) link eighteen longer and eighteen shorter strophes.

Traditionally, the main guest initiates a scroll of *renga*, whose first strophe is called *hokku*. Such *hokku* will in a later time begin to be independently created without any connection to *renga*. This is called *haiku*. *Hokku*, just like modern *haiku*, requires a seasonal word, *kigo*, and a divisional auxiliary, *kireji*.

Moreover, the initiator must try to choose a strophe that matches the current atmosphere or mood. In this sense, a *hokku* tries to articulate the whole world of the *renga* meeting. This attention towards the present

world compels *renga* poets to sing of their surroundings quite objectively. This fundamental rule of *renga* was formulated by Nijō Yoshimoto (1320–1388), who was the first theoretician of *renga*. Nijō Yoshimoto (1982, 213–215) claimed in his *Hekiren-sho*: “If you intend to host a *renga*-party, you must above all choose the best time and the proper natural view. If you look at the scenes transforming according to the time, such as the time before the snow or the moon, or the season of fresh green, your mind will be deeply moved and words will come out. You should visit a flowering tree for a splendid view.”

The *hokku* consists of 5-7-5 moras, and the following shorter strophe of 7-7 moras is called *wakiku*. This is followed by another *ku* of 5-7-5 moras, forming the third strophe, *daisan*. *Renga* also follows the important rule of “giving up *uchikoshi*”, which is essential to making linked strophes a genuine form of *renga*. Giving up *uchikoshi* means that every poet must connect his/her *ku* directly to the previous strophe, with no regard to the one preceding it, even if it happens to be the master’s *hokku*. In other words, *renga* proceeds by continually expressing every new image, world or depiction of scenery new image, world or depiction of scenery. We must not stick to the same image. *Renga* avoids repetitions, ceaselessly seeking new images, becoming an open system of songs. Repetitions of the same image are considered detestable in *renga*.

A *renga* work will be made by different persons immersed in the same atmosphere. How is it possible? The guest *renju* composes the first *ku* (*hokku*) 5-7-5. Hearing this *ku*, the second person composes another *ku* 7-7.

Renga is a form of traditional Japanese poetry, which first appeared in a Japanese mythology. *Renga* is also a trans-subjective way by which plural people create one work of poetry in the same place. Despite the widespread misconception, Matsuo Bashō was in fact a master of *renga* rather than a *haiku* poet. It was Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) who invented both the term and the concept of *haiku* in the Meiji era (1868–1912). *Renga* is a kind of linked poetry (*tsurane-uta*) originating from plural subjectivities. The connection of two strophes is called *tsuke-ku*. Bashō admitted that some of his disciples could create a wonderful *hokku* (the initial *ku*) as skillfully as he could, but that he had no rivals when it came to the art of linking and judging. Linking (*tsuke*) is the essence of *renga*.

It is Matsuo Bashō who raised *renga* to the highest level of art. In Japan *renga* was however originally a religious event. For example, in the civil

war of the Sengoku period (1467–1568), a military commander would pray to the gods to be victorious in the next battle. With his trusted followers and friends, he would then hold a *renga* meeting. The most famous *renga* meeting of this kind is the *Atago Hyakuin renga*. At that time, people thought that Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) would take the highest position under the emperor. One of Nobunaga's general, Akechi Mitsuhide, was commanded by Nobunaga to come to the West to help the allied army. Mitsuhide's family belonged to the Clan *Toki*. Mitsuhide thus composed this *ku* in *Atago Hyakuin renga*: “*Toki wa ima ame-gashita-shiru satsuki kana.*” The superficial meaning of the verse is “The time is May and it is raining.” Actually, however, the word *toki*, “time”, means implicitly Mitsuhide himself who was a member of the Clan *Toki*. In this context *ame ga shita shiru* means to rule over the whole country, namely “under the heaven” (*ame ga shita*). In this *hokku*, therefore, we can also read the resolution of Mitsuhide: “In the next battle I will achieve a glorious victory and I will govern the country.” In 1582, during a raid at Honnōji temple in Kyoto, Oda Nobunaga was killed.

A very famous *renga* master of the time, Satomura Shoho (1524–1602), was also invited to the *Atago Hyakuin*. He was a friend of Mitsuhide. A central point in *renga* is the cooperation between the participants, or the *renju*. In the same way, Mitsuhide wanted to focus the mind of his soldiers on one unity: “We will defeat our enemy, Oda Nobunaga.” Oda was in Honnōji temple, and Mitsuhide's command is famous: “Our enemy is in Honnōji.”¹

To create a *renga* sequence, a master (*sōshō*) must be together with the troupe of *renju*, in the same place and at the same time. When an ordinary poet writes his/her poem, they can control the poetic system from the beginning to the end. In direct contrast with this approach, the unfolding of *renga* depends on the participants (*renju*) working together. Moreover, an element of non-anticipable alterity enters the system of each particular *renga* due to the collaborative presence of other participants. When another participant links to a strophe in an unexpected way, an element of alterity is introduced. No strophe of *renga* can stand alone, for it is always complemented by a strophe composed by another participant. This complementarity, rooted in the individual strophe's incompleteness, makes

¹ The Taki-Shuzo-Renga-society (Kyoto) uploaded fragmentally the *Atago Hyakuin renga* on YouTube. You can see the reconstructed scene in the following address: <https://youtu.be/96Oy6Dz-LM>

each strophe of the *renga* idiosyncratic. Utilizing a phenomenological concept, one can say that this sense of incompleteness opens up a freely moving space or the possibility of a horizon of satisfaction. This horizontality opens up a possibility that can always be variously interpreted, and, in this sense, it makes possible the complementarity between strophes. Nose Asaji (1894–1955), a major researcher of *renga* (1950), described this process as “the exchange of moods,” in which “each strophe should be made alive in the whole,” originating in the opening presence of each individual strophe’s incompleteness.

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“The Atmospheres of Tones”: Notions of Atmosphere in Music Scholarship Between 1840 and 1930

Friedlind Riedel

I MUSICAL EVIDENCE FOR ATMOSPHERE

Hermann Schmitz concludes his extensive deliberations on perception, deliberations that fill an entire volume of his monumental and somewhat utopian *System of Philosophy*, with the emphatic statement that music is “the most telling and evident proof” that feelings (*Gefühle*) are “non-subjective atmospheres” (Schmitz 1978; my translation).¹ This claim points to the centrality of music in Schmitz’s phenomenology of atmospheres (Schmitz 1969) and simultaneously tenders a new notion, if not ontology, of music: the proposition that one thinks of music *as* atmosphere (see Riedel 2015). The musical points of reference that Schmitz turns to when defining “feelings as atmospheres” consists chiefly of Johann Sebastian Bach’s organ works and the *Wohltemperierte Klavier*, to

¹ Unless otherwise indicated translations from German language source material are my own. The German term *Atmosphäre* is translated as “atmosphere”, *Stimmung* as “Stimmung”, and *Gefühl* as “feeling” or “mood”.

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which he elsewhere adds dance- and march music, congregational singing or breakdance. But more importantly, it is music scholarship where the philosopher finds the kind of complex argumentative material against the backdrop of which he comprehensively particularises his anti-mentalist and anti-physicalist phenomenology of the “felt-body” and his notion of “feelings as atmospheres”. He discusses at length nineteenth- and twentieth-century propositions about music and feeling made by Friedrich von Hausegger, August Halm, Heinrich Schenker, Hans Mersmann, Viktor Zuckerkandl, Heinrich Bessler or Robert Francès, to name just a few. But his intervention in musicological theories of feeling becomes particularly evident when he takes issue with nineteenth-century music theorist Eduard Hanslick.

Hanslick had notably claimed, in his seminal text *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen. Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Aesthetik der Tonkunst*, first published in 1854, that it is impossible to unequivocally determine particular feelings in music. Rather, music, for him, was unmitigatedly equivocal. According to Schmitz’ reading of Hanslick, the musicologist and others after him had concluded from this that music did not express, communicate or represent particular feelings, as previous scholars had averred, but, instead, music only portrayed their “general dynamic properties” (Hanslick 1854, 16; my translation). The only element that music had “in common with our feeling-states [*Gefühlszustände*]” Hanslick insisted, was the hitherto “conspicuously disregarded notion of *movement*” (ibid.). Movement, he observed, was fundamental to both music and feeling. However, movement was “only *one* of the concomitants of feeling, not the feeling itself” (ibid.). Feelings in music could therefore be alluded to through the movement patterns in music but they would remain tentative and incidental. It would hence be misleading to seek to identify particular meanings and emotions in music. If anything, music only presented “silhouettes” of feelings that were interpreted and filled with meaning by the listener (Hanslick 1854, 22). The sense of ineffability that music invoked only confirmed, for Hanslick, that music was ambiguous and polyvalent. From this he drew the controversial conclusion that feelings were not key to the understanding of music. For him the only true content (or subject) of music were *tönend bewegte Formen*, “sounding moving forms” (Hanslick 1854, 32; translation of Rothfarb, Landerer in Hanslick 2018).

Schmitz doesn’t challenge Hanslick’s arguments by simply introducing a new understanding of music, nor does he elaborate a new theory of feeling. In fact, he concurs with Hanslick about the centrality of movement (*Bewegung*) in both music and feeling (Schmitz 1978, 255). And he also

maintains an emphasis on form since music and sound are for Schmitz suggestive of motion in their phenomenal appearance as *Gestalt*. Ultimately, what he brings to the discussion about feelings and music is a radically different philosophical *anthropology*—in other words, his understanding of the human. In phenomenological tradition, Schmitz' human² is anti-dualistic: it does not consist of a physical body with a metaphysical inside where soul, spirit or autonomous consciousness can reside. Instead, Schmitz's anthropology is monistic: his whole human is *Leib*, a dynamic felt-body or a feeling body. In consequence, he vigorously rejects Hanslick's definition of feeling as a "consciousness of a boosting or restraint of the state of our soul [*Seelenzustandes*], thus a state of contentment or discomfort" (Hanslick 1854, 4; my translation). For Schmitz, Hanslick's definition is symptomatic of an ideology of *introjection* according to which feelings are located in the metaphysical inside of a human being and thus assigned the status of private inner states. The philosopher, in contrast, posits that feelings are encountered by a person as external and spatially distributed *atmospheres*. Rather than being "movements of the soul" or "psychic processes", as Hanslick had supposed, feelings, for Schmitz, are out there in the world, that is, *in* the musical and sonic events.

In making this move Schmitz is able to come up with a new solution to the problem of *ineffability*. While the speechlessness of the listener was, for Hanslick, proof that there are no explicit feelings in music, for Schmitz it attests to the fact that feelings are not internal, or subjective states. Turning Hanslick's argument around he insists that the very speechlessness in which listeners find themselves only indicates that the feelings they encounter while listening to music do not originate in themselves but must be external to them and therefore alien. It is the unfamiliarity with these feelings, their extraneousness, that makes listeners speechless rather than an inherent vagueness of feelings in music. Moreover, that persons find themselves powerfully moved yet speechless when trying to identify the feeling, Schmitz continues, is not particular to music. The feeling that is brought on by a landscape, for instance, appears equally unnameable yet substantive, vague yet powerful. It too must therefore be out there in the landscape rather than in the metaphysical eye of the beholder. Like a landscape, Schmitz contends, music does not simply communicate explicit feelings *to*, or arouse feelings *in*, a subject, but rather, feelings approach a listener in music as external powers that grip the body (*Leib*). What is

² Note that Schmitz considers all living beings to be *leibliche Wesen*. With regard to their "primitive present", there is no difference between animal and man.

encountered in music, according to Schmitz, is thus a “pre-subjective form of feeling”. A somewhat raw feeling in its “not yet anthropocentrically organised archetypical form”—in other words: an *atmosphere* (Schmitz 1978, 260).

In this chapter, I investigate the notion of atmosphere that lies at the heart of Schmitz’s argument about feelings and music. Rather than discussing “atmosphere” as a phenomenological concept in Schmitz’s work, however, I first chart the semantic scope of the German term *Atmosphäre* and trace its use in music scholarship preceding Schmitz.

2 REFINING A VAGUE NOTION

Just as *Stimmung* barely developed into a stand-alone concept in nineteenth-century music writings (Klotz 2011; Welsh 2012), the notion of “atmosphere” played an even more marginal role. Thus, far from claiming that there is a coherent history to “atmosphere” as an aesthetic concept in music scholarship, the following is but an eclectic assemblage of footnotes, lectures, biographic passages and fragments of musicological treatises, in which the term atmosphere appears as a musical or acoustical concept. Faced with such inconsistent source materials, I proceed systematically by discussing the conceptual logic that is mobilised when the term atmosphere is used metaphorically or metonymically by music scholars of the long nineteenth century, namely Adolf Bernhard Marx, Adolph Kullak, Lina Ramann, Guido Adler, Oskar Bie, August Halm, Paul Bekker, Ernst Kurth and Richard Specht. In their texts, atmosphere is conceived in terms of a variety of different but overlapping ontologies: as mass, as emanation, as force, as texture, as mereological relation and as embeddedness.

With regard to recent scholarship on atmospheres, I propose two major revisions concerning the cultural history of the term. Firstly, I challenge the widely shared assumption that the aesthetic notion of atmosphere is a metaphorical appropriation of a meteorological term. A detailed reconstruction of the genealogy of the term in German tells a much more complex story of semantic shifts that, from its inception in the seventeenth century, render vague the very difference between the metaphorical and meteorological meanings of the term. As I briefly show, it is the field of medicine where the term atmosphere accrues its social semantics and its affective and aesthetic meaning. It is this medical, indeed anthropological, notion of atmosphere, that music scholars mobilise in conjunction with the meteorological concept when speaking of “musical atmospheres”

(Marx 1839) or “sound-atmospheres” (*Klangatmosphären*) (Adler 1929). Pursuing these historical-semantic shifts, I argue, affords a better understanding of the term “atmosphere” not only in the work of Schmitz but in subsequent debates about music, sound and atmosphere.

Secondly, I propose dating the emergence of atmosphere as aesthetic concept much earlier than previously assumed. While Hubertus Tellenbach (1968) and Hermann Schmitz (1969) are commonly accredited with having introduced the term into phenomenology and philosophical psychology,³ the first systematic introduction of atmosphere as an aesthetic concept was already presented by Hugo von Hofmannsthal half a century earlier in a lecture on Shakespeare’s plays in 1905. Hofmannsthal’s lecture has been overlooked. This is perhaps understandable, given that it failed to strike a chord at the time, unlike a text on *Stimmung* by Georg Simmel just a few years later (1913) that actually pursues a very similar theoretical project but that became an important reference in scholarship on atmosphere and *Stimmung*. Much like Schmitz, Hofmannsthal developed his notion of atmosphere through music, suggesting once again a structural affinity between the two.

3 SOUND MASSES

It is only in a footnote in the *Allgemeine Musiklehre* (1839) where Adolph Bernhard Marx, influential early musicologist, composer and precursor of an “energetic” notion of music (Köhler 1996), describes the “atmospheres of tones”. This footnote, a para-text to a passage on the instrument of the organ, is self-referential: as we shall learn, “atmospheres” for Marx were para-tonal yet substantial. Equally substantial were the assertions that he had relegated to the margins of his texts. In a vigorous manner he objects here to earlier theories of music that had reduced music (*Tonkunst*) to the mere arrangement of tones (*Töne*) into melody and harmony and that had regarded sound or resonance (*Schall*), timbre (*Klang*) and even rhythm as extraneous (Marx 1839, 174–175). The organ, however, did not seem to fit into this reductive ontology of music. The organ stops (mixtures), that added multiple additional partials to a fundamental pitch for any particular key, did not operate at the level of simple “tones” but at that of complex

³While the notion of “atmosphere as feeling” appears, of course, in earlier writings, as well as for instance in Willy Hellpach’s *Geopsyche* from 1939, these two works by Tellenbach and Schmitz use the term atmosphere more systematically as a phenomenological concept.

spectra: they altered the “sound-mass” (*Schallmasse*) of a tone. They were not tonal themselves but embedded each “fundamental tone” in an “atmosphere of harmonics” (see also Marx 1847, 11). This “atmosphere” of tones could furthermore transform “the entire space of air” into “resonant matter” (*mitklingende Materie*) and had the capacity to powerfully “grip the listener”. This observation was not reducible to the spatial expanse of the church, nor to the instrument of the organ itself. Marx remarked that the multifarious musical figures in a massive fortissimo performed by the middle-voices of a symphonic orchestra were equally not about melody or harmony but operated on an atmospheric level by “yielding” an “indivisible” “tone- and sound-mass” (*Ton- und Schallmasse*) that Marx describes as “presiding” (*walten*) over the musical occasion. Far from being peripheral to music, however, this material atmosphere was for Marx the very “fullness of being” (*Fülle des Wesens*) of tones that would otherwise remain “abstract” and “dry” (Marx 1839, 175).

But this is not all. Marx went on to argue that such “atmosphere” was not simply about the texture of overtones in which the (fundamental) tones were “enveloped”. Atmosphere itself even generated tones by means of the very vibrations of air. These emergent *combination tones* were audible to the listener as musical atmosphere, even though they were not being performed by any one instrument of the orchestra. Marx’s para-tonal atmosphere was thus also extra-textual. Indeed, it indicated the crucial difference between notated tones and the audible musical events. Moreover, since he envisioned the auditory atmosphere as materialising in the very moment and locus of performance, it rendered the listener critical and co-productive to the unfolding of the musical event. In short, Marx’s insistence on the relevance of timbre, resonance and “sound-mass” as essential to the “art of tones”, that is to (the experience of) music, flew in the face of Eduard Hanslick’s subsequent proclamation of the autonomy of music.

Marx’s quasi-metaphoric appropriation of the term, which he elaborated through references to air, thunder and light, considered “atmosphere” according to three different parameters. Firstly, atmosphere was a *para-tonal* dimension. It was distinct from the tones (conceived according to a logic of notes or organ keys) in that it added to a fundamental tone a spectrum of harmonics, literally “accompanying-tones” (*Beitöne*). Marx treated such sonic atmosphere as fundamental, not as subsidiary, to the ways in which tones (music) would “approach [*entgegentreten*] and engage the listener”. Secondly, atmosphere was, by analogy to air, and in contrast

to “abstract tones”, ultimately spatial, material and, furthermore, indivisible (*unzergliedert*). Thirdly, it was with regard to its material but aerial texture that the atmosphere of tones was described as all-powerful and as presiding over the musical occasion and even capable of exercising an “all-powerfully grip” upon the listener. Marx even uses the idiom “*schalten und walten*” (operate at will, preside over, prevail) that was used to describe the absolute agency of an almighty god or of a person of authority. This grip, however, should not be read here as a form of spiritual or disembodied arousal. Even though Marx was committed to a spirit-centred Hegelian idealism and would even be celebrated posthumously by Carl Dahlhaus as the founder of the theory of musical form (Köhler 1996, 10), he emphatically insisted that the body was crucial to musical appreciation. The “miraculous effects of music (*Tonkunst*)”, he insisted, were due to its capacity “to affect the human in entirety”, that is, the entire body (and not just the ear), soul, sentiments and ideas. Furthermore, the musical stimuli of the nervous system, that is of the body, were “sanctified” (*geheiligt*) by their capacity to mediate between the “sound-mass” and the soul, that is, by transmitting tones into the “secret depth” where they “touch the foundation or bottom of our being [*Dasein*]” (Marx 1839, 357; my translation).⁴

4 ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN METEOROLOGY AND MEDICAL SCIENCE

To understand Marx’s extensive footnote on musical atmospheres, it is necessary to enquire further into the etymology and historical usage of the term *Atmosphäre* in German. The “*atmo-sphaera*”, from Greek ἀτμός-σφαῖρα, first defined in 1638 by polymath John Wilkins as an “Orb of gross, Vaporous Air immediately encompassing the Body of the Moon” (Wilkins cited in Lewis 2012, 2) soon became a curious scientific object

⁴ It would be wrong to read Marx’s footnote in terms of a physicalist notion of sound—that is, as acoustic vibration and in terms of a physiological understanding of auditory perception. Marx had insisted that in contrast to the senses of taste and touch, the sense of hearing does not register sound as raw matter, which is then assembled into meaningful *Gestalt* in the soul, *Gemüt* (psychic state), or mind of the listener. Rather, the auditory world already appears as a holistic *Gestalt*, and it is this *Gestalt* that the ear grasps and transmits “into” the human listener, where it resonates with their inner movements that animate *Dasein* (Marx 1855, 49). In doing so, Marx avoids the challenge, that others such as Hanslick faced, of having to explain how a physical auditory stimulus translated into meaningful music.

scrutinised at length by natural philosopher Robert Boyle. The neologism was quickly adapted by German scholarship. But in crossing the linguistic boundary, it also traversed into another scholarly field, namely medicine. German physician Johann Jacob Woyt referred to Boyle when he attempted a definition of *Atmosphaera* in his *Gazophylacium Medico-Physicum* (Woyt 1709), a German-language medical encyclopaedia and standard reference of its time. Here in much more general terms—that is, without any reference to the moon or planets—“atmosphere” referred to effluvia and material aerial substances (*Theilgen*) that would inevitably “emanate from each and every body and ascend into the air” (Woyt 1709, 99; my translation). In later medical and pharmaceutical texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, atmosphere was then primarily used to refer to precisely those effluvia that emanated from the human body.

Depending on its use in medicine and meteorology, the term atmosphere acquired two distinct but overlapping meanings. Both meanings are given in the 1793 edition of the first major German dictionary, by Johann Christoph Adelung, but they can also be traced through numerous medical and meteorological books. In its meteorological meaning, atmosphere referred to the sphere surrounding celestial bodies that, in the case of Planet Earth, also marked the realm of existence for all living beings. Thus, for those populating the surface of the planet, the Earth’s atmosphere was the ubiquitous *medium* of their dwelling, movement and existence. The pneumatic substance of life. By the early nineteenth century, the notion of atmosphere as climatic medium and sphere of collective existence became mobilised as metaphor to refer to the intellectual, spiritual but also moral environment and its influence upon the individual. In this vein, Lina Ramann (1833–1912), a biographer of Franz Liszt and a rare woman scholar in an age that grossly undervalued most female contributions, mentioned “intellectual (*geistige*) atmospheres”. She described the atmospheres of the upper classes and atmospheres of particular times and places. She understood these as having a strong bearing on a musician’s development: either hindering or stimulating the creative process. In much the same way, Marx had envisioned the ideal artist as being driven by an urge to lift himself up into a “free atmosphere of art” (Marx 1838, 507), and argued that the “spirit of the artist” would dissipate in the “stifling atmosphere of the salon” (Marx 1837, 186). Moreover, composers were tasked with capturing the “spiritual and emotional atmosphere of their era” in their musical works (Specht 1921, 18). This notion of atmosphere referred to a somewhat disembodied sentiment, a mentality in which the spirit of an individual was embedded. Such notions of atmosphere

as zeitgeist or moral environment were not particular to writings on music but common tropes across the humanities of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Indeed, this decidedly metaphorical notion of atmosphere fitted all too well into the metaphysics of the humanities of the day where music became a pivotal “metaphor of transcendence, something conceptual, disembodied and intangible” (Trippett 2013, 5).

The medical notion of atmosphere must however be distinguished from this meteorological atmosphere and its metaphysical associations with a spiritual sphere. In medicine, atmosphere referred to the aerial, elastic, magnetic and electric effluvia that emanated from and enveloped the human body, in fact, *any* sentient and non-sentient body—just as celestial bodies would cast vaporous stuff (Woyt 1709; Adelung 1793). These individual “atmospheres”, in which people were seamlessly enshrouded as if by invisible aerial matter, were, in a parallel to galenic *humours*, indicative not only of the medical or physiological condition of a human being but also of their feeling-states, their social status and gender. Rather than being ambient media of dwelling and existence these atmospheres were media of *appearance* and *presence*. It was by way of their bodily effluvia that the character of someone or something became tangible. One’s feelings could literally be smelt as room-filling atmospheres. In the poetic and aesthetic use of the term from the late eighteenth century onwards, as, for instance, in Christoph Martin Wieland’s *Musarion*, atmospheric scent and atmospheric sensuality came to stand in metonymic proximity rather than in metaphorical distance. Moreover, in contrast to the meteorological meaning of atmosphere as ambient air which, by its very omnipresence, had no centre or location in space, atmosphere-as-effluvia implied the idea of a clear centre, which, at the same time, constituted the material source of its emanation.

5 MUSICAL EMANATIONS

Referring to weather phenomena such as thunder and lightning, Adolph Bernhard Marx invokes, in part, the meteorological semantics of atmosphere. But, ultimately, it is the meaning of atmosphere as bodily effluvia, with all its medical and social connotations, that Marx mobilised when he construed the timbral and harmonic dimensions of a musical event as forming an “atmosphere” around tones. According to this logic, the overtones and the sound-mass “emanated” from the fundamental pitch and endowed it with character (*Wesen*) just as the atmosphere surrounding a person was characteristic of that person. Marx’s use of the term “atmosphere” here is

reminiscent of that of Johann W. von Goethe, who observed in his conclusion to *Elective Affinities* that “character, individuality, inclination, tendency, locality, circumstance, and habits, form together a whole, in which every man moves [*schwimmt*] as in an atmosphere” (Goethe 1809, 309). Even though the water-metaphor here seems to imply a logic of atmosphere as environment, Goethe’s atmosphere remains anthropocentric and bound to the person. To him, “atmosphere” was a medium that conveyed something *about* that person, namely their character. It is in this sense that the acoustic emanations Marx described were not just unqualified auditory matter but conveyed the tones’ character (*Fülle des Wesens*) or affective essence. Thus, atmospheres had an epistemic function that exceeded the notatable pitch. Moreover, as corporeal atmosphere was spatial and expansive, so did the atmosphere of tones fill a space. What distinguished Marx’s musical atmosphere from the corporeal atmosphere surrounding human bodies, however, was their primary sensual register. Marx transposed the notion of atmosphere-as-effluvia from the olfactory to the auditory realm. What provided the semantic confluence between the two was air and its uncertain status between materiality and immateriality. The notion of atmosphere, however, recognised the (quasi-)material texture of sound and scent. Just as one was bodily involved in an olfactory atmosphere in the presence of another human body, so were auditory atmospheres of tones, the acoustic emanations, capable of gripping a listener.

Since the emanations of atmospheric matter endowed a body with character, it comes as no surprise that this notion of atmosphere was also transposed into the context of stage performance. Not only were aspects of sound and resonance considered atmospheric envelopments here, but the whole of a musical situation was described as being atmospheric. Conceiving of music as atmosphere, Marx described the musical accompaniment required for the scene of Euphorion in Goethe’s *Faust II* as Euphorion’s “unique and own atmosphere” (Marx 1845, 385). Just as the sound-mass endowed the individual tones and thus music with atmospheric character, so did music provide Euphorion, the character on stage, with his own unique atmosphere.

It is critical to note that Marx’s “atmosphere” had not yet fully acquired the meaning of “feeling” or “mood” but, instead, referred to the character of something, that which made a tone distinctive and particular beyond its designated pitch (see also Spitzer 1942). His “atmospheres”, in other words, were not just vague feelings in the air but made tangible the *individuality* of a character or of a tone.

6 ACOUSMATIC MUSIC AND VIRTUAL EMANATIONS

By the beginning of the twentieth century, “atmosphere” had become a popular term in germanophone scholarship on opera. In his discussion of Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, Oskar Bie, who taught aesthetic theory at the Berlin music academy, wrote that the timbre or sound (*Klang*) of the trumpet and a C-major motive endowed the character Florestan with an “atmosphere much greater than the entire stage” (Bie 1913, 221). In a similar vein, dramatist and musicologist Richard Specht described Pogner, in Wagner’s *Meistersinger*, as being placed in a “music-atmosphere [*Musikatmosphäre*] that suits him” (Specht 1921, 230).

If we consider *atmosphere-as-bodily-emanation* as the source domain for its now more clearly metaphoric appropriation here, then the music-atmosphere that Bie and Specht observed on the opera stage came about through an act of *transference* or *substitution*. It was not the singing voice, which literally issued forth from the body of the operatic singer, that manifested an atmosphere about him. It was instead the musical sound of the trumpet or the orchestra at large that endowed the character on stage with atmospheric qualities. The corporeal source of the musical atmosphere was not identical with the acoustic source of the musical sound, namely the instruments. In fact, as the instruments were neatly hidden in the orchestra pit, they could only be heard but not seen. It was precisely in this acousmatic setting, with the orchestra hidden, that the source of the musical atmosphere could be transposed to the body of the singer. Brian Kane quotes an anonymous commentator who in 1826 emphatically remarked: “how much more atmospheric music becomes when it resounds unseen” (Kane 2014, 111).⁵ Here, however, it is not simply a dematerialisation and thus transcendence of acousmatic music that renders music atmospheric, as Kane argues. Rather, in the substitution of the source of atmospheric and sonic emanation, the musical sound of the orchestra, separated from its visual moorings, could virtually emanate from the singer’s body where it somehow re-materialised as *his* or *her* atmosphere. Just as individual atmospheres produced by corporeal effluvia were indicative of the medical and psychological state of a person, so was the musical atmosphere, in which a character on stage was enveloped, indicative of their state of

⁵ As I could not access the original source it remained unclear to me if the term *Atmosphäre* is used in the original text. I assume that this is not the case, which however does not affect the argument I put forth here.

feeling. For this reason, the acousmatic sound of opera music had a strong tendency to be atmospheric. In retrospect one might argue that the church organ, the model for Marx's musical atmosphere, was atmospheric for equally acousmatic reasons. The organ, embedded in a church's architecture and often not in direct sight of the congregation—the static pipes could be seen but mostly not the movement of organist, keys or pedals—organ music permitted an acousmatic situation of atmospherically spatialised intensity that pervaded the church. In referring to the acousmatic relation between operatic singer and orchestra, the notion of atmosphere accrued the semantics of feeling and mood much more clearly. It is significant, however, that these feelings were not those of the audience, nor of the musicians, nor of the composer. Instead, the musical atmosphere was a *mode* of affective musical and sonic appearance of the characters on stage in their dramaturgical situations.

7 COMPOSING ATMOSPHERIC TEXTURES

The “sound-atmosphere” (*Klangatmosphäre*) that an orchestra could “weave around the plot” or around “the mimic action”, as Austrian musicologist Guido Adler phrased it (Adler 1929, 1066; my translation), didn't just operate at the nexus between the audible and the visual, between the body of the actor or singer and the musical sound of the orchestra. For Bie, the atmosphere as “surrounding sphere of emanation” could also be located within music itself. Thus, the vibrant semiquaver beats, for instance, performed by the orchestra that accompanied the singing voice of Belmont in Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, disseminated an “indescribably suggestive atmosphere”, not just around the performer who embodied the character Belmont on stage but “around the melody of his voice” (Bie 1913, 161; my translation). Influential music critic Paul Bekker, who in his music-phenomenology had propounded a decidedly materialist understanding of music as physical sound (*Klang*), defined “atmosphere” in line with its original medical meaning as the “fluidity [*fluidum*] of a human's character”. Mobilising this notion, he then remarked on Debussy's dramatic works that the orchestra would become the “atmosphere of the singer's voice” by providing it with harmonies (Bekker 1934, 148; my translation). Here, it is not simply music that is ascribed with atmospheric potency, but Bekker and Bie used the term atmosphere, as had Marx, to refer to particular compositional techniques—techniques that had the capacity to endow a musical phenomenon, for instance, a melody or a

particular voice, with a characteristic musical atmosphere. Here too, the "vibrant atmosphere" (Bie 1913, 255) was not simply "in the air" as an ambient medium, but pertained to something distinct from itself, which it charged with meaningfulness and whose sphere of presence it marked: a stage persona, a singer's voice, a melody or, for Marx, even just a single tone.

8 MERELOGICAL RELATIONS: ATMOSPHERE AS AESTHETIC CONCEPT IN 1905

Although "atmosphere" was widely used in poetic and theoretical writings on music from around the turn of the twentieth century, it did not develop into a firmly established concept in music scholarship. As previously mentioned, the first to advance "atmosphere" as a strictly aesthetic concept in its own right was Austrian novelist Hugo von Hofmannsthal. His 1905 lecture about "atmosphere" in Shakespeare's plays, delivered at the annual meeting of the German Shakespeare Society in Weimar, consequently deserves more attention here. This is also because it highlights yet another important structural aspect of atmosphere, namely what I have come to term *mereology*, the study of whole-part-relationships (Riedel 2019).

While literary scholars had been fond of discussing the characters of Shakespeare's plays in their own right, dissecting the whole into parts "as if the characters stood in an airless space", Hofmannsthal urged his audience to "see and feel" "the whole", the shared "*Dasein*", that is, the ways in which the characters are each related not just to each other but "to all others". This "whole", according to Hofmannsthal's poetical elaboration, was "soaked by music"; or, as he puts it about Shakespeare's romantic plays, "all issues forth into this music, all abandons itself to music" (Hofmannsthal 1905, XIII). This musical whole, which, Hofmannsthal remarked, is termed "*l'ambiente* in Italian", was best approximated by the "vague" term *atmosphere* (Hofmannsthal 1905, XIX). The particular atmosphere that animated Shakespeare's plays in their entirety, Hofmannsthal claimed, was *nobility*, in fact, "a feeling of nobility". To Hofmannsthal, nobility was not the social status of an individual, but an atmosphere that was felt by all: a feeling in which all characters were dissolved (Hofmannsthal 1905, XXII). This feeling embedded all characters in class relations that exceeded themselves; nobility was the very "air they breathed", the "living space" in which they existed, the shared vital "element" from which they "emerged", "the space between them", "the

ensemble”, “the whole”: “the atmosphere”. Hofmannsthal used the term atmosphere to refer to the affective sphere emanating from and enveloping individual bodies as if they were shrouded in festive music (Hofmannsthal 1905, XIII). But he also activated another aspect of the original meteorological concept, one that is actually more dominant today: namely its definition as *aerial medium* in which not just one but a multiplicity of bodies was embedded.

Hofmannsthal’s lecture attempts to systematically establish “atmosphere” as an aesthetic concept (Hofmannsthal 1905, XIX). Though curiously ignored by later atmospherological treatises, it is emblematic in its reliance on references to music and sound. In this endeavour, atmosphere and music turn out to be coextensive. While in the first half of his lecture, music epitomises the aesthetic effect of Shakespeare’s drama, the musical metaphors become redundant with the introduction of the term “atmosphere”. “I could speak of the music of the whole, or of a harmony, of a soulfulness [*Durchseelung*]” “this imponderable, this impalpable, this nothingness that yet is everything [...] I would like to term: the atmosphere” (Hofmannsthal 1905, XX, XIX; my translation). What warrants for Hofmannsthal the interchangeable use of “music” and “atmosphere” is their structural similarity. For Hofmannsthal, both music and atmosphere operate on the level of the “whole” by way of embedding and rendering individual characters of a play or tones in a musical piece in an all-encompassing feeling or mood. Out of this structural resemblance, Hofmannsthal crafts a long list of analogies between music and the play. Just as each pitch was embedded in, and related to, “the melodic whole” (Hofmannsthal 1905, XIII), so was each character in Shakespeare’s plays entrenched in, and emergent from, the atmospheric feeling of “nobility”. And just as the atmosphere of “nobility” afforded the whole play with a character or mood, so was the “whole music”⁶ permeated and characterised by a thematic material (Hofmannsthal 1905, XVII). Similarly, just as a chorus or rhythm could draw a musical event together and evoke its “wholeness” (Hofmannsthal 1905, XVII), so were the characters brought to life in an atmosphere that constituted their world as a whole. Thus, the “solemn and sublime tones” in Beethoven’s Symphonies were not to be identified as individual “characters” or motifs in their own right. Rather, these “sublime tones” corresponded to the general sense or mode of roy-

⁶Note that Hofmannsthal simply uses the term “music” when referring to the whole instead of terms such as “composition” or “work” (*Werk*).

alty and nobility in Shakespeare’s plays or to the use of light and colour in the work of Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens: they were the affective *matter* in which the music unfolded rather than individualised and simply juxtaposed tonal figures (Hofmannsthal 1905, XVIII).

What lies at the heart of Hofmannsthal’s attempt to establish atmosphere as a concept is hence the discovery of whole-part-relationships both in Shakespeare’s plays and in the act of reading them. Each play was held together not simply by the logic of the plot, but by an ambient feeling; a feeling that permeated and animated the whole play and that could not simply be localised in any one of the characters. Nor was the atmosphere simply the background against which the figures would stand out but atmosphere referred to an aesthetic texture where the very figure-ground relationship had collapsed. In Hofmannsthal’s account, atmospheres are thus ultimately *mereological* phenomena. And the epistemic tool to introduce them is, for the poet, music. To Hofmannsthal, music and atmosphere were both structured mereologically, in that each part—be it a tone, sound or motive in a musical event or, in the case of the play, a character, scene or gesture—was related to the whole of the event. This occurred firstly by taking part in the atmosphere of the whole event and secondly by embodying or reflecting its overarching atmosphere. In effect, atmosphere or music wielded an authority over the individual characters (see also Griffero 2014). The sociologist Georg Simmel, who only a few years later discussed both “*Stimmung*” and “atmosphere” in the same mereological vocabulary as Hofmannsthal, would even insist that the *unity* of a landscape and the *atmosphere* of a landscape are, in fact, the same. For Simmel, it was the very feeling of *Stimmung* that produced the unity of music, plays, landscapes and persons (Simmel 1913).

9 EMBEDDING IN MUSIC, DISSOLVING IN SOUND

This mereological aspect of atmosphere was widely invoked when the term was used in music scholarship, not least because music was equally analysed in a mereological terminology. Composer and music educator August Halm, for instance, compared the sonata to a bureaucracy: “The individual, that is the theme, the melody [in the Sonata], is not a being in its own right [...] instead it is employed, consumed [...]. It has its position and function within the whole [...]; it is held together by the atmosphere of the whole event” (Halm 1913, 252; my translation). In this rather relational notion of atmosphere, atmospheric effects in music were precisely

those that evoked a sense of unity, ubiquity and wholeness. Thus, music was not atmospheric per se. Rather, those improvisational and compositional techniques and styles that emphasised the unity of a musical event or the affective cohesion of an artistic performance were prone to evoke atmosphere. For this reason, the notion of atmosphere immediately promised to be fertile in the study of opera, which Richard Wagner had celebrated as *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Already in 1858, Alfred Kullak had insisted that *Stimmung*—a term that can be found in the writings of Friedrich Vischer (1857) or Theodor Lipps (1903) in collocation with “atmosphere” as *Stimmungs-atmosphäre* or *atmosphärische Stimmung*—was irreducible to the music but was rooted in the integrated whole of the arts. In a Hegelian manner Kullak asserted that “nothing individual is the highest, only the whole” (Kullak 1858, 272; my translation). But operatic action and voices were also framed as atmosphere and in mereological terms against such idealist metaphysics of the musical whole. In the historical analysis of *The Transformations of the Opera* (*Die Wandlungen der Oper*) by Bekker, who had defined music in materialist terms as sound-perception (*Klangempfindung*), atmosphere almost reaches the status of a key term. Giving primacy to music, and distancing himself from Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Bekker identified precisely those musical structures as atmospheric that operated on the level of the whole operatic event and permeated an entire performance. Choirs in Carl Maria von Weber’s operas were, for instance, an “atmospheric element of the plot”: the vastness of the sound of the numerous and indistinguishable voices absorbed the total picture (*Gesamtbild*) of the work and thus “mirrored” the work as a whole (Bekker 1934, 50). Bekker’s observations regarding the French *opéra-comique* were even closer to Hofmannsthal’s concerns. The characters in these French operas were not “singular and distinctive” but would “become themselves atmosphere”. Ascribing these atmospheric characters with dramatic function, Bekker emphatically states that “milieu, scent and sound—in particular the voice—are part of the human action” (Bekker 1934, 129; my translation). Similarly, in the energetic theory of music of swiss musicologist Ernst Kurth, atmosphere became a critical notion. In his endeavour to re-think music in terms of dynamic motion, that is in a monistic ontology of kinetic energy, Kurth described impressionistic music in mereological terms and concluded that what was so characteristic about musical impressionism was that individual sounds were dissolved in “sound-atmospheres” (*Klangatmosphären*) (Kurth 1920, 360; see

also Kurth 1931, 141); just as Hofmannsthal had phrased that the individual figures in Shakespeare's play would dissolve in the atmosphere of nobility.

So, in contrast to a metaphysical understanding of musical wholeness and unity that referred to music as a reified composition, a through-composed piece (*Werk*), atmosphere here seems to account for a sonorous cohesion of the musical event in its phenomenal appearance. Accordingly, atmosphere could also encompass the situational setting in which music was performed. Writing much earlier, Lina Ramann, otherwise strongly influenced by nineteenth-century idealism, had ascribed the "background atmosphere" of a salon with the capacity to transform the music performed there. According to the respective atmospheres of different localities "the same tone or music sounded different in the salon of the parvenu than it did in the salons of educated society" (Ramann 1880, 401; my translation). Far from being autonomous, music here didn't just evoke a particular atmosphere but was itself modulated by the social and spatial setting. It was embedded in, and mediated by, the specificities of class and location as a whole. In turn, the Salon and its class distinctions were invoked in the very act of listening.

10 CONCLUSION

In the metonymic and metaphoric appropriation of the term atmosphere in scholarship on music and sound, atmosphere oscillated between, the immaterial and the material. From the medical concept of atmosphere as emanation, a notion of atmosphere was transposed into the auditory sphere according to which a musical element, be it a tone, a melody or a singer on stage emanated a musical atmosphere which in turn endowed them with character—either as a material emanation or, in situations of acousmatic listening, as virtual emanation. Where the meteorological notion of atmosphere as all-encompassing and all-pervasive seamless medium was invoked in music writings, it was the unity of a musical event that the notion of atmosphere referred to. It was however not only the ingenious composition of tones (*Töne*, in the sense of audible pitch) that in their artistic arrangement formed an aesthetic and ideal whole. Rather, when music scholars used the term "atmosphere" and appealed to its mereological meaning, they tackled the affective indivisibility of the musical sound event in performance—namely when music manifested as sound-mass, as seamless texture, as flow of tones (*Töne*) or as tangible

room-filling sonic matter, all of which were deemed essential to the “art of tones”. A fundamental assumption operative in theories of music (*Tonkunst*) was that tones were singular in themselves and, as such, could form endless artistic permutations. The term atmosphere, in contrast, was called upon when addressing those musical parameters that were indivisible and could not easily be measured, parameters such as timbre (*Klang*) or sound-mass (*Schall*). Atmosphere made an appearance at the point where tones (*Töne*) lost their autonomy as individualised atoms of a musical whole. And maybe it is not a surprise that concerns about the materiality of musical sound met with mereological observations in the notion of atmosphere.

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Architecture as Musical Atmosphere

Alberto Pérez-Gómez

Recent architectural theory has increasingly identified the importance of atmosphere as a primary aesthetic concept for the discipline (Wigley 1998; Zumthor 2006; Havik et al. 2013; Pérez-Gómez 2016a). The concept of atmosphere, congruent with phenomenological philosophy, implicitly questions objectivist aesthetics and its common reduction of aesthetic *experience* (bodily, multi-sensory, emotional and synesthetic) to aesthetic *judgement* addressed to intellectual cognition, and therefore the false presumption of architectural meaning residing in a geometric “3-D object” or decorated shed, more or less autonomous of context and situation. Foregrounding atmosphere, architecture can be grasped as a *cognitive and emotional* communicative setting appropriate for lived situations in qualitative *places*.

Architectural meaning is indeed dependent on *atmospheric qualities*, far more important than specific styles or formal syntaxes, yet the complexities associated with postulating atmosphere as a central architectural category are considerable. Architecture has a certain fixity of form, texture and materiality necessary to convey its appropriate moods. Architectural atmospheres are not merely an orchestration of subjective effects: it is obvious, for example, that atmospheres can be changed by users. An angry speech could easily obliterate the sacred mood of a church. Atmosphere is

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perceived immediately and therefore affects us not only intellectually but also, often more fundamentally, at a pre-reflective level, as we act; it qualifies consciousness as it addresses motor skills, our sentient and knowing bodies. As Tonino Griffero has argued, atmospheres are ever present, even in the so-called no-places of contemporary urban sprawl (2010, 73). Atmospheres induce human actions and also result from them; they compound into an experience of situations more or less coherent framed by the artefacts we call architecture. In this, they are similar to our experience of a piece of music, yielding a *sense*, at best, a poetic image, as the outcome of a spatio-temporal event. To fully understand what is at stake for architecture, it is crucial to grasp the roots of the concept of atmosphere in architectural history and its theories, and closer to us, its affinity with the concept of character (*Fr. caractère*, *It. indole*) in eighteenth-century architectural theories.

Good, meaningful architecture was always understood historically as a musical, harmonious atmosphere. Key to the association is the German term *Stimmung*, which has a breath of meaning absent from its rendition in other European languages. The root of *Stimmung* is *Stimme*, the voice; the verb *Stimmen* means to tune, pitch, dispose, harmonize and be correct. Thus, the word's range is astounding, capable of denoting both fugitive emotionalism and an objective understanding of the world. *Stimmung* itself can be rendered as atmosphere but also as tone, mood, feeling, disposition and even frame of mind. The term entered into aesthetic language with romantic philosophy; *Stimmung* represented the possibility of attunement brought about by art, valorized above all other forms of positivistic knowledge. Seeking tuned atmospheres became central to artistic expression, being both the effect and the knowledge art provides, crucial for our psychosomatic well-being. Thus, the work of art allows us to recognize ourselves as complete and purposeful in order to abide in life.

Romantic *Stimmung* was aimed at the emotional heart: *Gemüt* was considered the true seat of consciousness. This mode of understanding is multi-sensory, *aesthetic* in the original Greek sense of the term; as real knowledge that is fundamentally sensory and atmospheric, not as an inferior kind of intellectual knowledge (gnoseology), such as defined by G.W. Leibniz and A.G. Baumgarten and followed up by Kant. This recovery by romantic philosophers made explicit the implicit multi-sensory nature of artistic meaning at work in the Western tradition that was taken for granted in architecture before the popularization of Cartesian psychology in the late seventeenth century, with its belief—still unfortunately common

today—in independent mechanistic senses, in the hegemony of disembodied vision and in associationist explanations for the emergence of meaning, as if it were a conceptual construction, resulting from the transmission of data (sensations) to the brain.

Further, as philologist Leo Spitzer has observed, the etymological roots of *Stimmung* are decidedly musical (Spitzer 1963). There appears to be a constant musical connotation attached to the word, present in the word's family accompanying its intellectual connotation of unity of environment and feelings prompted by it (Spitzer 1963, 7). The unique German gained currency after the Enlightenment, and yet it is fundamentally indebted to the all-embracing Greco-Roman and Christian tradition that is at the roots of all European languages. In its current German meaning as “changing mood of the moment”, *Stimmung* translates easily into mood or atmosphere, humour and temper. Its more prevalent early European sense as the “unity of environment and man”, however, finds no full equivalent in common modern usage and translations. In fact, originally, the word did not suggest a changing, temporary condition, but rather a stable “tuned-ness” of the mind, *the attunement of embodied consciousness*.

Indeed, according to Spitzer, *Stimmung* partakes from two semantic threads woven together in ancient and medieval thought: the ideas of the “well-tempered mixture” and of the “harmonious consonance”. Through an exhaustive analysis of textual evidence from philosophy, theology, literature and music theory in Western cultures, Spitzer concludes that the two concepts: *κεράννυμι* (*keránnymi*) in Greek, which translates as *temperare* (in Latin), meaning to mix or combine in the right proportions (like water and wine to make a tempered drink: κράσις, meaning the right mixture; and *ἁρμονία* (*harmonía*), in Greek, translated as *concentus* or *consonantia* in Latin, meaning harmony and concert (of musical sounds or forms), cannot be fully grasped apart from each other. According to Spitzer, both semantic threads were integrated in European culture and broke up only between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Spitzer, 7–9). Only after the Enlightenment, he concludes, did European mankind come to question the central feeling of musicality at the core of all meaning. Nevertheless, the modern German *Stimmung* retains these two etymons, particularly clear in translations such as the French *accord* or the English *temper*.

The architectural theoretical corpus from Vitruvius (c. 35 BCE) to the end of the eighteenth century emphasizes the central importance of harmony and temperance for various aspects of the architectural work: the

very two etymons that make up *Stimmung*. Architectural form must be harmonious and well proportioned, either numerically or geometrically, to produce spatial conditions for human life resonant with appropriate meanings. And temperance is a key value to describe the healthy effect of architectural atmospheres, and even the proper mixtures in architectural materials. Not surprisingly, starting with Greco-Roman culture, architecture was typically deemed analogous to music. It suffices to recall Goethe's famous phrase: *architecture is frozen music*. The analogy, however, is misunderstood when treated in strictly formal terms, reasoning that since music deals with proportions and mathematics for its harmonic effects, producing beautiful sounds, this must be transposable in some way to the objective form of buildings—seeking the congruity of the parts of a work and its whole ruled by proportional ratios, producing an architecture which can be *judged* as aesthetically beautiful. In fact, a careful study of our Western theoretical tradition reveals that the musical analogy has involved, since its inception, far more than such formal transpositions. The central issue has been the design of atmospheres for human situations contributing to a good life, one that is in harmony and balance, properly tempered. The spatial experience of architecture was therefore like that of music, capable of conveying cognitive, poetic moods through primary emotional sentience. Curiously, however, the attunement thought to be brought about by an atmosphere today is generally understood as a matter of subjectivity, in stark contrast with the objectivity of mathematics evoked in the traditional literature.

Grasping the generalized *functional* performance of music in European societies prior to the nineteenth century starts to help us understand the depth of the analogy. Concert music is a relatively recent invention—music performed for a fully attentive and silent spectator sitting in judgement, in a darkened space. It is curiously analogous to the still prevalent contemporary misunderstanding of architecture as an aesthetic object: a virtuoso display of novel forms for the pleasure of the tourist. Today, the ubiquity of music stored in our telephones and iPods and which we “input” directly into our ears regardless of our location further clouds the analogy. Like other directed sensory stimuli, music qualifies our experiences of place. It is a powerful instantiation of the true dimensionality of the present moment (never merely a non-existing point). Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty used musical experience as an example revealing the “thick present”, which is the very nature of the phenomenological perception of time. Thus, music corresponds readily to the dimensionality

of the atmospheric perception (Pérez-Gómez 2016a, 151–155). By affecting, harmonizing and disrupting our vital rhythms, our breathing and the beating of our heart, music communicates moods and cognitive feelings. It is through these effects that Greek musicians differentiated among their seven “modes”, and eventually similar effects were associated to the various tonalities in the diatonic scale in the theory of composition by J.P. Rameau. We can modify the emotional perception of our cities by accompanying our walks with a sound track; today, technology is even capable of eliminating ambient sound. Yet, in traditional cultures, music always had a function, very much part of what we consider today its purely “aesthetic” appeal—accompanying political and religious festivals, dinners or battles—and was a contributor to the specific atmosphere of places, rooms, churches and festive halls. Just like music complements, often in a very dominant fashion, our multi-sensory perception of places, climate and topography, traditional architecture was understood as having a similar effect upon its natural and urban sites, granting always priority to its situated condition.

Architecture has been realized in permanent buildings, gardens and in ephemeral festivals; artefacts with varying “real” temporalities that have created profoundly significant memories for their inhabitants. Such temporalities obviously differ substantially from the performance of music, yet they cannot be reduced to objective form. Architectural meaning is given in situations that are anything but frozen; they are fundamentally temporal and atmospheric. It is true that architecture can be assumed to have a self-evident objectivity, one that, today, we can even conceptually separate from its topographical and climactic situatedness and isolate in our computer screens. Nevertheless, it is an error to pretend that its meanings can be subsumed by its reality as an object. As it frames habits, institutionalized gestures and human actions, architecture fades in and out from our attention. It addresses primarily motor, pre-reflective consciousness, which constitutes, according to recent so-called third generation cognitive science and neurophenomenology, 80% of our total consciousness, with the last 20% taken up by reflective attention and judgement. Perception, as phenomenology demonstrates, is not a construction in the mind but is, on the contrary, meaningful always at its inception. The primacy of synaesthesia in perception intuited by romantic philosophy was clearly postulated by the phenomenological philosophers of the twentieth century and has recently been scientifically corroborated (Pérez-Gómez 2016a, 139). It is thus that architectural meaning is understood through phenomenology,

and we can declare that architecture cannot be reduced to pictures or merely “objective” formal products. Atmosphere is given as a whole and, in a sense, at the very moment of one’s physical, embodied and multi-sensory encounter with a place, as one *acts* framed by the architectural environment. Thus, the architectural atmosphere provides a tone for our significant actions—the attunement which is often all-important because it goes unnoticed, while it modulates our awareness of qualities that reinforce or become a counterpart of those present in climate and topography, constructing an experience liable to become memorable: a poetic image, the often identified aesthetic effect of good architecture, which is a second-order meaning in continuity with the first.

* * *

The analogy of music and architecture for the sake of a good life is explicit in Vitruvius’ *Ten Books on Architecture* of 35 BCE (*Vitr.*, I). Architecture operates as a communicative setting: *its beauty is, in fact, its meaning as it contributes to human health and self-understanding*. Vitruvius is not concerned with innovation or efficiency. If parts of buildings must be in proportional relations according to mathematical ratios, this is not a question of mere formal composition. The same numbers, epitomizing regularity, were believed to govern musical and cosmic orders, in particular, the “heavenly star-dance” of the sun, the moon and the five visible planets, also being at the base of the harmonious and well-tempered city, an attuned environment that could bring order to inherently disordered human lives. Vitruvius believed it was imperative to use the gnomon or shadow tracer to bring the order of the heavens down to earth, to bear on the geometry of the urban environment, enabling the tracing of the cardinal orientations (the *cardus* and *decumans*, the main north-south and east-west streets of a city) and the determination of the directions of the winds, a fundamental knowledge to orient the city so it could be a healthy environment for its inhabitants (Vitruvius, 29–31). This, he thought, was the configuration of the *templum* of architecture, the place of foundation and also the place for the contemplation of the order itself, upon which individual buildings and public spaces could be laid out and constructed. Translating the musicality of the heavens onto earth, framing situations in time through geometric configurations, architecture operated like music, contributing to psychosomatic health. It contributed in fact to the experience of humanity’s participation in the providential order of nature and

the cosmos, understood as a manifestation of the divine itself in Stoic philosophy. Harmony and temperance, incorporated into Christianity, remained the core values in architectural theory throughout the Renaissance and well until the end of the Baroque period in seventeenth-century Europe.

Recovering classical themes during the Renaissance and inspired by Marsilio Ficino's Christian Neoplatonism, the hero of the erotic narrative cum architectural treatise *Hypnerotomachia Polifili* (1499) also demonstrated the nature of architecture as musical atmosphere. Polifilo registers the primary synesthetic understanding of perception prevailing in the Renaissance, a condition to grasp the full possibilities and communicative potential of *Stimmung*, one that allows harmonies to be visible as well as audible, *touching* the fullness of bodily consciousness. In an early episode of his narrative, Polifilo experiences quasi-erotic completeness in the presence of a beautiful frontispiece, the gateway of one of the fragments of classical architecture he encounters during the pilgrimage he undertakes seeking his beloved Polia (Colonna 1499, 34–49; Pérez-Gómez 2016b). He first describes the emotional and cognitive experience of harmony immediately present in the atmosphere, produced by the building's sensuous materials, textures and colours, accompanied by an overwhelming surrounding music of uncertain origin, and the stories about good and bad fortune (*concordia discors*) displayed in the iconology of the gate. Profoundly moved, he decides to measure the building, learning that the facade is governed by proportions generated by the first four natural numbers, exactly like tonal music in the Pythagorean tradition, and noting the discovery as an important lesson for future architects. Architecture thus propitiates well-being by framing human action; a stabilizing catharsis, a good life in view of the uncertainties of destiny and the bitter-sweetness of human experience, always driven and often torn by desire. The ultimate end is invariably completion, both physical (sexual) and spiritual, the ascent of the human soul and its recognition as part of a greater whole. This final realization takes place in a circular "Temple of Love", the only circular building in the narrative, where Polia and Polifilo, who had been walking together for some time, finally recognize each other as their respective lovers: the sexual completion is enabled by the perfect architecture, sanctioned in a ritual devoted to Venus, which is also a spiritual revelation: *the perfect consonance*. Thus, the spherical soul, broken in two at birth, finds its other half, according to the tale often told by Plato: a perfect attunement in the most perfect of atmospheres bound by a circle, the

highest point in the hierarchy of religious buildings in the Renaissance (also ascertained by Alberti and Bramante, among others, and resonant with Nicholas of Cusa's and Ficino's definition of God as a ubiquitous circle or sphere whose center is everywhere and nowhere).

Coinciding with the culmination of Renaissance, polyphony in Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina's expansive and deliberately spatial music, which according to a biographer possesses "a certain quality of indefiniteness", creating "an atmosphere on which the spirit floats" (Spitzer, 130), Andrea Palladio could imagine the possibility of applying relationships of ratios, such as 4:2::2:1, to the harmony of volumes, a *proportionalità* capable of encompassing the design of lived space framing a good life and now including its three directions: breadth, width and height. Indeed, this concept of a sequence of proportions (as opposed to a simple ratio) implied either time (as in music) or volume, and was made familiar to him by his acquaintances and patrons, like the mathematician Silvio Belli and the Venetian patrician Daniele Barbaro, who thought of *proportionalità* as the ultimate secret of arts seeking to partake from the "necessary truths" of mathematics. Barbaro conveyed this emphasis in his annotations to the sections on music (Book 5, *On the theatre*), in his own translation of Vitruvius' *Ten Books on Architecture* (1556 in Italian and 1567 in Latin), for which Palladio provided the illustrations.

Indeed, in his *Proemio* to that edition of Vitruvius, Barbaro deals with the Aristotelian theory of *habitus* and its application to architecture. Framing customary activity—habitual human actions—architecture contributes to foster good habits in society in view of the common good. Towards this aim, the prudent architect seeks creativity and clarity "from the bottom-up", acknowledging the mores of the cultural world. In this, and in the tradition of Aristotelian "practical philosophy", architecture attains the status of "contingent truth". Yet, Barbaro argues, architecture is one of the arts that also aspires to approximate the *ratio* of "necessary truths", those whose model is Aristotelian theoretical philosophy, truths of mathematical certainty. Such necessary truths are embodied in proportions and *proportionalità*, which are also the basis of architecture's potential musicality. Framing interior and exterior spaces with such musical structures modulate habits in view of overall harmony. Appearing in counterpoint to habits, foregrounded and disappearing, such harmonious architecture could enable and limit human actions and ultimately reveal life's transcendental meaning, which for this period in the sixteenth century meant promoting the sacralization of human life as such.

I may offer as an example the Basilica in Vicenza and its rendering in Palladio's theoretical treatise, his *Quattro Libri* (Palladio 1570, 203–205). In the book, proportionality is central, understood for the first time in the history of Western architecture in “three dimensions”, coordinating the measurements of rooms, their depth, length and height so that they convey a “symphonic” experience. Palladio notates in this way his architectural ideas, appearing as drawings of his work in the book. So he proposes a perfectly harmonic Basilica for Vicenza, one that nevertheless is not imposed on reality by demolishing a pre-existing medieval building. When one visits Vicenza, if one is not aware of the care taken by the architect, one may easily suppose that the building built is exactly the one drawn. And yet it is not—Palladio did not raze the old buildings, literally frozen habits, to build his ideal project. The ideal music is embodied but not imposed; it qualifies everyday life to make it more *temperate*. The harmonic form has a transformative effect on the complex and contradictory functions that were housed by the buildings at the very centre of the Renaissance city, including brothels, taverns, places for the imparting of justice and city governance.

European culture started to question the centrality of music as a paradigm for transcendental understanding in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The possibility of architecture attaining its meanings through a mimesis of the cosmic star dance (or silent concert) through the implementation of mathematical or geometric operations was questioned, specifically in the writings of Claude Perrault. The desire for harmony in architecture was often voiced in the eighteenth century, but different means were sought, seeking expression in analogy to denotative and poetic language. While still emphasizing the importance of harmony as a goal, eighteenth-century character theory adopted a linguistic analogy to take the place of the older musical one (Pérez-Gómez 2016c, 71–86).

A remarkable example of this new attitude, arguably still fertile today, is a work published in 1780 by Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières entitled *Le Génie de l'architecture*. Le Camus believed that harmony and musical atmospheres could be sought in the analogy between the physical dimensions and qualities of architecture and human sensations, yet it could not be attained by theoretical prescription or mathematical ratios, *only through expressive fictions*, engaged through narratives. He rejected the generally still prevalent belief in the importance of the classical orders of columns and their proportions. This seemingly radical shift between numbers (proportion and geometry) and words for the purposes of musical atmospheres

may be difficult to comprehend in our times, when mathematics are mostly an abstract discipline that underscores technological instrumentality, in radical *discontinuity* with poetic language. Yet this was hardly the case in the original understanding of the relationships between the *trivium* and the *quadrivium* in classical learning. Narrative and discursive language, the substance of rhetoric, was well understood by Aristotle in his practical philosophy as crucial for attaining prudent wisdom in politics and poetics, *phronesis*: human truths that do not have the precision of mathematical syllogisms like in theoretical philosophy or *scientia*, yet address the central questions of human existence. Interestingly, *phronesis* is a cognate of *temperance*, sought by Palladio and Barbaro as I have shown earlier. This association was also recognized by Cicero, writing close to the time of Vitruvius, explaining the range of meanings related to the Greek *σώφρονα* (*sophrona*) and *σωφροσύνη* (*sophrosyne*) rendered as Latin temperance, wisdom, moderation and modesty (Spitzer 1963, 81).

Le Camus' book presents the earliest ever thorough qualitative description of architectural "space" in a human dwelling; moods are characterized through literary language and metaphor, as they are deemed appropriate for the diverse rooms of a house, which are experienced in a crescendo reminiscent of erotic tension (Le Camus 1780). The centrality of the private house as an example is of note and also a first in this treatise: architectural music had always concerned the public realm, the space of appearance, where self-understanding came about through participation in public actions and rituals, political and religious. But for Le Camus, the issue is broader than the private house as one architectural type among others. Le Camus was very concerned by what he perceived as a crisis of meaning in architecture, in the spatial experiences created by his contemporaries brought about by scientific mentalities and in instrumental theoretical writings that failed to address metaphysical questions. The issue was the possibility of poetic human dwelling and its deployment as musical atmosphere, at a time when the primacy and reality of the qualitative *places* that always appeared for human existence were being questioned by philosophical and scientific thinking, which postulated, instead, the primacy of homogeneous geometrical (Galilean, Newtonian) space. Dwelling is a symphony of experiences, appropriate atmospheres in tune with the adequate moods for the different functions of the house—that include archetypal human actions, ranging from the sober public rooms (or living rooms), to the delightful place for dinning, the privacy of the toilet and the bedroom. The atmospheres are carefully described, emphasizing char-

acteristics such as light and shadow, textures, colours, sound and smell, all qualities identified with the traditional experience of place. These are connected through thresholds, establishing a rhythm, like musical silences or bridges preparing every time for a new theme. Everything culminates in the place for love and sex but also, traditionally, of learning and spiritual recollection, a ubiquitous boudoir. As evidenced in some of his other works, Le Camus was fascinated by the possible spiritual knowledge brought about by Eros (Pelletier 2006). We may remember Marsilio Ficino's words in his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*: "Plato calls Love a bitter thing. And not wrongly, because anyone who loves, dies. And Orpheus calls him *gluchupichron*, that is, 'bitter-sweet'. Certainly, since love is a voluntary death" (Ficino 1564, 55). This reciprocity of life and death is, according to Octavio Paz, the master metaphor for poetic expression: life and death, irreconcilable through reason, made to coincide and make sense "in a single moment of incandescence" through a poetic artefact. Thus, architecture offers a moment of poetic completion in which, however ephemerally, the atmosphere that prepared the moment vanishes to become one with consciousness itself, and is thus kindred to spiritual experiences that were always sought by the architecture of the past, in temples and churches: the fundamental knowledge of purpose, both cognitive and emotional, made possible by musical atmospheres.

Despite an obvious theatrical and voyeuristic interest present in Le Camus' narrative—there were even hidden passages in the house for the owner to observe all activities—it could be argued that he went beyond the eighteenth-century philosophy of sensations. Experience is acquired from the senses, obviously understood through Cartesian psychology as independent mechanisms, yet they contribute to recover meaning by means of emotion. By emplotting this process and deliberately choosing narrative as the discourse of theory, while rejecting all instrumental applications, Le Camus recovered synaesthesia as a ground of architectural meaning and with it the possibility of a poetic architecture capable of offering musical atmospheres to experience.

The structure of architecture in buildings offers fixity and tectonic coherence in dialogue with their topographic situation and programmatic deployment. Architecture thus has the capacity of singing *in* and *through* us, voicing its harmonies directly to both our pre-reflective and reflective awareness. We can certainly grant that the same principles of atmospheric design can be used for ideological, propagandist and commercial purposes, as in department stores or political rallies. Yet, the musical

atmospheres gifted by architecture may ultimately reveal atmosphere as spirit, the ineffable which we are in existence, a wholeness that is also Holy. Isn't this in fact the "meaning" of all great music—it's healing power? Musical atmospheres, negotiating ordinary attunement, which according to Heidegger is the most powerful in *Dasein*, with extraordinary possibilities, an openness to those divinities that sweep us away, like Aphroditi seduced Helen of Troy, have the capacity to reveal the very purposefulness of existence.

Let me emphasize that there is no aporia in the understanding of musical atmospheres as both emotional and intelligible, structured and ephemeral. Romantic philosophy recognized, like Rilke much later, that "the inner is the outer". Furthermore, *Stimmung* preserved its musical aspirations while being formulated through poetic language, in lyrical forms and novelistic narratives. The novel became since the nineteenth century the central form of cultural expression, later to be adopted by almost all world cultures and rendered into movies and television: the telling of stories that deal with human issues, the true modern heir to a practical philosophy in the tradition of Aristotle leading to *phronesis*, wisdom, articulating human, situated truths and enabling a good life. Grasping the primary importance of poetic language for artistic expression thus appears as a central issue to be explored in relation to the enactment of *Stimmung* in modernity after the nineteenth century and up to our own times.

The quest for attuned environments, for musical atmospheres in architecture and urban design, is thus truly a comprehensive alternative to merely ecological and sustainable cities. Over and beyond technical issues and formal novelties, architecture may thus contribute to further the spiritual dimensions of human existence, perhaps even a genuine human brotherhood. The issue is indeed psychosomatic health. *Atmos*, the root of atmosphere, is also in the more primary Sanskrit word *Atman*, the undivided universal consciousness—associated with air, climate and our breathing in meditation, spirit and soul: our awareness of the continuity between pre-reflective and reflective consciousness in dream and awakened states. Privileging this modality of architectural space, avoiding signs with denotative meanings, personal styles and formal status symbols prone to ideology and idolatry, architecture could reveal a presence of the divine in the world, the *silence* which underscores and makes possible our linguistic being, which is nothing other than our self-recognition as purposeful: something which is hard-wired in our biology, but that we tend to question and even deny intellectually, propitiated by our self-made nihilistic environments.

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